The 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' : women, higher education and medicine in popular Victorian fiction by women.

Carr, Rachel

The 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor': Women, Higher Education and Medicine in Popular Victorian Fiction by Women

In Memory

of

The Revd Emma Hawkins, 1964-1990

'The history of every woman's movement is the history of a great fight. The women who strike out new paths for themselves and their sex are always moral Amazons; they lead forlorn hopes, champion lost causes, and can never be convinced that they are beaten.'

('Æsculapia', 'Women's Work in Medicine', The Lady's Realm, 6, (7/1899), 282.)

RACHEL CARR

Ph.D.

King's College, University of London

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' in popular Victorian fiction by women. It argues that cultural constructions of the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' were discursive interjections into Victorian debates over the educated/working woman; and that fictional inscriptions of these figures were, equally, attempts to negotiate and rework these debates. In particular, the thesis argues that the Victorian university-educated/medical woman disrupted a culturally constructed correlation between maleness and individuality; and that fictional 'Girton Girls' and 'Lady Doctors' contained and/or explored the anxieties and ambivalences generated by this disruption.

Chapter 1 provides a brief historical overview of women in education and medicine and considers critical work on the 'New Woman' in relation to the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor'. Chapters 2 and 3 analyse negative versions of the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' in relation to the appropriate education of women; female physiology; the unmarried daughter; medical ethics; the innate 'sickness' of woman; and woman's 'neutering' in the dissecting-room. Chapter 4 considers acceptable versions of the 'Lady Doctor' and 'Girton Girl' in relation to female delicacy; medical women in the colonies; and college friendships. Chapter 5 examines acceptably positive constructions of the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' and considers the ways in which they refuted arguments opposing college/medical women and promoted female autonomy and individuality. Chapter 6 concludes the thesis with a brief examination of the post-Victorian 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor'.

Key novels: Mary Myles, A Study (Elizabeth Edmonds, 1888); A Girton Girl (Annie Edwardes, 1885); Dr Edith Romney (Anne Elliot, 1883); Peace with Honour (Hilda Gregg, 1897); Many Daughters (Henrietta Keddie, 1900); Dr Janet of Harley Street (Arabella Kenealy, 1893); The One Too Many (Eliza Lynn Linton, 1894); The Medicine Lady (Elizabeth Thomasina Meade, 1892); No Ambition (Adeline Sergeant, 1895); A Newnham Friendship (Alice Stronach, 1901); New Grooves (Annie Thomas, 1871); Mona Maclean: Medical Student (Margaret Todd, 1892); Sweethearts and Friends: A Story of the Seventies (Mary Gleed Tuttiet, 1897).

Acnowledgments

I am grateful for the use of the facilities and for the help of the librarians at the following: the Bodleian Library; the British Library; the Fawcett Library; the Feminist Library; King's College, University of London Library; the London Library; public libraries in the boroughs of Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea (in particular North Kensington and Central libraries), Lambeth, and Westminster; the Royal Free Hospital Library; the School of Oriental and African Studies Library; Senate House, University of London Library; and the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine.

Grateful thanks to the Fawcett Library, the Royal Free Hospital Library and the trustees of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine for access to archive material.

Thanks are also due to the following:
Dr Margaret Reynolds who supervised the thesis for a year; Professor Leonee Ormond who took over as supervisor and whose diligence, patience and advice have been much appreciated; Dr Brian Horne who gave academic support; my family and friends who provided continued support, advice and encouragement; and, especially, Lesley Stevenson, a friend and colleague without whom this thesis could not have been completed.

CONTENTS

Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 The Learned Woman and Woman Healer: A Brief Overview

Women gained legitimate and legal access to higher education and medicine in the latter part of the nineteenth century after intensive debate and considerable protest: a debate and protest not silenced once women had entered these spheres but which continued up to and beyond the end of the century. Moreover, the debate did not first begin in the Victorian period: women healers and scholarly women were not unknown phenomena prior to the mid-nineteenth century. The legal provision of university and medical education for women in the nineteenth century was both the culmination of the work of earlier women and an example of the perpetual need to repeat, to consolidate and remind a patriarchal society of the capabilities and achievements of women. Victorian campaigners themselves referred back to a history of forgotten or marginalised female scholars and healers. To justify their own claims to female educational equality they rightly pointed out, ironically as women before them had done, that there have always been women 'learned' in scholarly and medical terms. [1]

The figure of the scholarly woman and the woman healer can be traced from ancient and classical to modern times, sometimes in the form of mythical tales, sometimes in factual accounts. Educated women are believed to have worked as surgeons and doctors in ancient Egypt.[2] In Greece examples of learned women and women healers include 'Phanostrate, a midwife and physician' and Hipparchia, a woman philosopher.[3] Roman accounts refer to Pamphile, 'a learned woman', Antiochus who was 'awarded special recognition ... for her healing art' and Julia Pye, Minucia Asste, Venuleia Sosis and Melitine, women doctors.[4] In the early

---

1 See, for example, Sophia Jex-Blake, 'Medicine as a Profession for Women', in Josephine Butler (ed.), *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture. A Series of Essays*, London 1869, pp.83-8 and Alice Zimmern, *The Renaissance of Girls' Education in England: A Record of Fifty Years' Progress*, London 1898, pp.1-19. Louisa Martindale recounts in *The Woman Doctor and Her Future*, London 1922, p.19 her 'realisation of the positions held by hundreds of women physicians and surgeons in medieval times'.

2 See Margaret Alic, *Hypatia's Heritage: A History of Women in Science from Antiquity to the Late Nineteenth Century*, London 1986, p.20.

3 Mary R. Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant, *Women's Life in Greece and Rome*, London 1988, pp.27, 23.

4 *ibid.*, pp. 159, 161, 162.

Christian period a mythical story in the *Fabulae* (C1-2 A.D.) tells the story of Agnodice. Forbidden by Athenian law to practise medicine, she disguises herself as a man, studies under Herophilus and practises medicine amongst a female community. Male physicians denounce her, angry at her appropriation of their trade. Saved by the support of her female patients, the story ends with the law against women practitioners being repealed.[5] This mythical story is interesting in that it articulates a male fear of loss of monopoly and a female desire to be treated by one of her own sex: both were issues raised in the nineteenth century.[6]

In modern times, learned women and women healers were also in evidence. Most notably, women are known to have held posts in Italian universities until the sixteenth century.[7] In Britain it was between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries that the woman healer and the learned woman became increasingly ridiculed, condemned and vilified. This marginalisation and the subsequent historical obscurity of women in education and medicine can be attributed to a variety of causes: the Church's control over medicine and education; the dissolution of the convents where much scholarly and medical work proliferated; the strength of the all-male guilds; and the gradual professionalisation of education. However, despite their marginalisation, the woman healer and the learned woman, although increasingly rendered invisible, continued to survive.

In 1512 an act was passed requiring medical practitioners to be examined and approved by a bishop, assisted in his examination by four doctors and four surgeons. Subsequent to this midwives, too, were required to follow the same procedure. Technically, this did not exclude women but as healers they were increasingly stereotyped as ignorant and superstitious. Midwives, especially, found their sphere encroached on by male accouchers.[8] Yet women continued to participate in producing medical writings and in practising healing. In the early seventeenth century, Charlotte Charke set up a dispensary in her closet, visited the sick and studied medical texts.[9] In the mid-seventeenth century, Elizabeth Grey

---

5 See Jex-Blake, in Butler (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.85.

6 See chapter 3, pp.82-98 and chapter 4, pp.129-141 below.

7 For example, in the fourteenth century Maddalena Buonsignori (Law) at the University of Bologna and in the fifteenth century Bianca Borromeo (Languages) at the Univeristy of Padua. See Rev. G. Butler, 'Education Considered as a Profession for Women', in Butler (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.70.

8 See Jean Donnison, *Midwives and Medical Men: A History of Inter-Professional Rivalries and Women's Rights*, London 1977, for a detailed historical analysis of midwifery.

9 See D.L. Hobman *Go Spin You Jade! Studies in the Emancipation of Woman*, London 1957, p.19.

published *A Choice Manual, or Rare and Select Secrets in Physick and Chirurgery* and Lady Anne Halkett 'served as a surgeon in the Royal army'.[10] Eighteenth-century midwives such as Sarah Stone and Elizabeth Nihell published on midwifery and criticised the male appropriation of this formerly female sphere. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Miranda James Barry disguised herself as a man, trained as a doctor, practised as a surgeon in the military and had a distinguished career.[11] She died in 1865, the year the first woman legally qualified as a doctor in Britain.

The main difference between the marginalisation of the woman healer and the scholarly woman prior to the nineteenth century is that women healers continued to practise and produce texts about treatments but they rarely broached the subject of the right of women to practise medicine - other than in the field of midwifery. In contrast, not only did women study but they wrote discursively about the need for women's education. It was perhaps easier for women to pursue scholarly paths than medical ones, for the latter implied public work while the former could at least take place in private. It was not untypical for noble women in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries to learn classical languages.[12] From the late seventeenth century onwards women demanded increased educational opportunities for their peers. In 1673 Bathsua Makin called for a revival of the education of gentlewomen, using examples of learned women from the biblical and classical past to justify her arguments, as the Victorians later used examples from the sixteenth century. Makin wanted to establish 'a competent number of schools ... to Educate Ladyes'.[13] Noting that '[a] learned Woman is thought to be a Comet, that bodes Mischief, when ever it appears', she points out '[h]ad God intended Women onely [sic] as a finer sort of Cattle, he would not have made them reasonable' and later suggests that 'Women ought to be Learned, that they may stop their ears against Seducers'.[14] Just over 20 years later, Mary Astell made *A Serious Proposal to Ladies*. The proposal was to establish, in effect, a college for women - what she tactfully calls a 'religious retirement' - where they will 'expel that cloud of Ignorance,

---

10 Elisabeth Brooke, *Women Healers Through History*, London 1993, p.105.

11 For further details see Isobel Rae, *The Strange Story of Dr. James Barry*, London 1958 and June Rose, *The Perfect Gentleman, the Remarkable Life of Dr James Miranda Barry, the Woman Who Served as an Officer in the British Army from 1813 to 1859*, London 1977.

12 Examples most often given by Victorian writers are Lady Jane Grey and Elizabeth I.

13 [Bathsua Makin], *An Essay to Revive the Ancient Education of Gentlewomen, in Religion, Manners, Arts & Tongues. With an Answer to the Objections Against this Way of Education*, London 1673, p.4.

14 *ibid.*, pp.3, 23, 25.

which custom has involv'd us in'.[15] She did not achieve her aim. In the early eighteenth century, Elizabeth Elstob wrote and published her scholarly work on Anglo-Saxon writing. Later in the century, Catherine Macaulay Graham published a history of England. She also wrote *Letters on Education* where she warns of the dangers of denying women education - '[h]ow many nervous diseases have been contracted? How much feebleness of constitution has been acquired, by forming a false idea of female excellence[?]' - and proclaims herself in favour of the co-education of boys and girls.[16] Two years later, Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was published. She argues for female education in a wider context of female emancipation: 'That women at present are by ignorance rendered foolish or vicious is ... not to be disputed ... the most salutary effects tending to improve mankind might be expected from a REVOLUTION in female manners'.[17] Some 30 years later, Mary Somerville began publishing her scientific observations. She had been discouraged from learning in her childhood: 'I was annoyed that my turn for reading was so much disapproved of, and thought it unjust that women should have been given a desire for knowledge if it were wrong to acquire it.'[18] Mary Somerville lived to see - and approve of - the foundation of the first 'proper' higher education college for women.

1.2 The Opening of Medicine and Higher Education to Women

Women healers and learned women prior to the mid-nineteenth century thus inscribed their femaleness in modes which ran counter to dominant versions of 'femininity'. Consequently, male hegemony rendered them invisible or designated them extraordinary exceptions to the rule of female inadequacy. They were denied access to knowledge and training, adversely affected by legal changes, and often reviled. Nonetheless, the Victorian campaigners inherited a tradition of female participation in scholarly activity and medical work. Events in the nineteenth century thus did not create the phenomenon of the woman doctor or scholarly

---

15 'A Lover of Her Sex' [Mary Astell], *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, For the Advancement of Their True and Greatest Interest*, London 1694, p.61.

16 Catherine Macaulay Graham, *Letters on Education with Observations on Religious and Metaphysical Subjects*, London 1790, p.47.

17 Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, London 1985 [first published 1792], p.317.

18 Martha Somerville (ed.), *Personal Recollections, from Early Life to Old Age, of Mary Somerville with Selections from her Correspondence*, London 1873, p.28.

woman but rather legitimised her former illicit and/or clandestine existence. The concerted campaign for legal and social acceptance of the woman doctor and the woman undergraduate began in the 1840s and 50s. It comprised both collective and individual action and occurred within a culture increasingly anxious about dislocations of prescribed gender roles, yet, simultaneously, increasingly obsessed with debating their validity. Demands for women's entrance to universities and the medical profession also began, significantly, just at the time when these institutions came under public scrutiny and were in the process of implementing or debating their own reformation.

In terms of higher education, questions were raised concerning university intake; courses of instruction offered; the provision of classes; the organisation and funding of the universities; and the profligate lifestyle of undergraduates uninterested in scholarly matters. As early as 1850, Lord Russell's Royal Commission recommended that Oxford University establish new halls, make greater use of private houses as residences, admit students without compelling them to join a college and offer degrees without residence.[19] These measures would attract a wider spectrum of students with different economic backgrounds. Indeed, changes in the provision of elementary education for boys later led to suggestions from liberalisers that the universities should be more accessible to the less privileged. The ideal university for Huxley, for example, was one where 'all sources of knowledge, and all aids to learning, should be accessible to all comers, without distinction of creed or country, riches or poverty'.[20] The notion of the university as the domain of the privileged upper-class boy, a place where learning took second place to pleasure, was increasingly referred to critically. A rethinking of subjects suitable for academic study led to the expansion of courses offered to allow due attention to literature and science.[21] There was also discussion about appropriate (and economic) methods of teaching within collegiate universities and the suitability of the examination system. The universities began to adapt themselves to changing social, economic and educational perspectives.

Likewise, the medical profession underwent a series of transformations. Parliament had begun to address the need for a systematised medical training,

---

19 See Vera Brittain, *The Women at Oxford: A Fragment of History*, London 1960, p.23.

20 T.H. Huxley, 'Universities: Actual and Ideal', *Contemporary Review*, 23, (3/1874), 658.

21 Huxley notes that '[w]ithin the last twenty years, Oxford alone has sunk more than a hundred and twenty thousand pounds in building ... Physical, Chemical, and Physiological Laboratories ... Cambridge ... is taking the same course', *ibid.*, 670.

introducing 17 different bills between 1840 and 1858, culminating in the 1858 Medical Reform Act. [22] The 1858 act required examination by recognised boards, created a centralised appraisal of medical training and implemented a Medical Register. Signing the register did not become a legal requirement but doctors unable to do so due to a lack of specified training could not compel the payment of fees; were unable to take posts in general hospitals, the forces or poorhouses; could not sign death certificates or give evidence to juries; and were accorded no legal protection. Alongside legal reform, those in the profession worked to gain social standing and credibility by emphasising medical ethics and the personal qualities required in a physician.[23] The popular stereotype of the doctor as a drunken, lecherous physic was still apparent as late as 1841 when *Punch* magazine printed a series of satirical pieces detailing the profligate life of a medical student and the minimal amount of study needed to train as a doctor.[24] By the end of the century this stereotype of the doctor had been superseded by a new one: the doctor as a morally worthy guardian of the spiritual life of his (and, eventually, her) patients, as well as competent curer of their bodily ailments.[25]

Redefinitions of the role and function of education and medicine had both a positive and a negative impact on female access to these hitherto closed spheres. Some university professors perceived women's higher education as part of the need for general reform and offered support by admitting women to their classes. Alternatively, some official decision-making bodies in the institutions used their power to exclude women. Within medicine, the first attempts by women to access the profession were blocked by both the rigidity of the universities and by legal reform. In May 1856, Jessie Merton White wrote to the Registrar of the University of London asking to be admitted for the diploma of medicine. In July, the Senate turned down her request. Two years later, the 1858 Medical Reform Act was passed. Although not intended as a measure to exclude women, it effectively prevented them from signing the Medical Register: none of the approved examining boards admitted females to their examinations. Despite the Medical Reform Act, two women did sign the Medical Register prior to the 1876 legal change which

---

22 For a detailed account of the changing nature of medicine in the Victorian period see M. Jeanne Peterson, *The Medical Profession in Mid-Victorian London*, London 1978.

23 For a further discussion of this see chapter 3, pp.82-98 below.

24 See anon., 'The Physiology of the London Medical Student', *Punch*, 1, (2/10/1841-18/12/1841), 142, 154, 165, 177, 185, 201, 213, 225, 229, 244, 253, 265.

25 For a further discussion of this see chapter 3, pp.82-4 and chapter 4, pp.141-5, 152-5 below.

allowed women's medical training. These women were Elizabeth Blackwell and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson.

Elizabeth Blackwell trained as a doctor at Geneva College, New York State. She gained admission after a miscalculated appeal by the authorities to the students: not because of their progressive attitude towards women and medicine.[26] Qualified as a doctor in 1849, she visited Britain in the same year, was welcomed by the majority of the medical profession as an endearing anomaly, and was permitted to gain experience at St Bartholomew's Hospital. She went on to attend La Maternitée in Paris to complete her training as a surgeon.[27] Returning to New York in 1851, she overcame considerable opposition to open a dispensary for women and children. In a subsequent visit to Britain in 1858-9, she signed the Medical Register and gave a series of lectures on the profession of medicine by women. By this time the friendliness of most male doctors had been superseded by a deep-seated opposition to the notion of a female practitioner. The right of foreign practitioners to sign the Medical Register was subsequently removed.[28]

During Blackwell's latter visit to Britain she was introduced to Garrett Anderson, and is said to have inspired and encouraged her to gain a medical training. Garrett Anderson eventually became the first woman to qualify legally as a doctor in Britain. From 1860-1 Garrett Anderson gained admittance to lectures and classes at Middlesex Hospital, supported by some forward-thinking lecturers. Her attendance was abruptly terminated when the initially friendly students protested against her presence. Six years after White's request, Garrett Anderson then approached the Senate of the University of London for admission. It referred back to its 1856 decision and refused. Her father's subsequent presentation of a Memorial to the Senate asked that the technical objection to admitting women be removed. A motion in favour was proposed by the Vice-Chancellor and lost only on the casting vote of the Chancellor. Failed attempts were then made to gain access to training in other medical schools in Britain. Garrett Anderson eventually secured

---

26 The authorities of the college did not want to admit Blackwell but they did not want to take responsibility for refusing her application. Permitting the students to make the decision seemed the solution. The raucous and largely drunken meeting of students unexpectedly voted in favour of her application.

27 During her time at La Maternitée Blackwell contracted an eye infection when treating a patient. This led to the loss of sight in one eye. She was then unable to fulfil her ambition to practise as a surgeon.

28 The Church of England made a comparable ruling this century to prevent women priests who had trained abroad from working as priests in England.

the right to be examined by the Society of Apothecaries. Her success was attained only after the threat of a lawsuit: the charter of the society used the word 'person' in defining the terms by which students might be accepted for examinations. She qualified in 1865 and signed the Medical Register.[29]

Following Garrett Anderson's success, between 1867 and 1868 two more women - Emily Colbourne and Frances Hoggan - passed the preliminary examinations at the Society of Apothecaries. Fearing further infiltration by women, the court of examiners then ruled that attendance at private courses of instruction prior to entrance for the examinations was no longer valid. As women were denied access to 'public' lectures at medical schools, this promising avenue of training was now closed to them. Garrett Anderson advised women to train abroad until the climate of opinion had changed. Some women did so. Her advice was ignored by Sophia Jex-Blake.

Jex-Blake was determined to gain access to a medical training in Britain. She applied to Edinburgh University (1869) with the help of Professor David Masson, a supporter of higher education for women. The university objected to her attendance on the grounds that exception to common university policy could not be made for one woman alone. After she was joined by six other women permission was given for the arrangement of separate classes. The story of the Edinburgh pioneers has been told in detail by Jex-Blake herself, and by her biographers.[30] Briefly, the students remained at Edinburgh until 1871 during which time there was a series of highly publicised events. In 1870 there was uproar over the Hope Scholarship, a scholarship, ironically, founded from the proceeds of lectures given to women at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The scholarship was awarded to the student attaining the best mark in Chemistry, and, in 1870, that student was Edith Pechey. The scholarship constituted three months' tuition in analytical chemistry in the university laboratory. Awarding it to a woman would have resulted in the unacceptable: mixed classes. The university deprived Pechey of the scholarship on the grounds that she was not a member of the class. Without acknowledgment of their status as class members the women students could not be

---

29 Garrett Anderson went on to open the St Mary's Dispensary for Women and Children (1866) and the New Hospital for Women (1872).

30 See Jex-Blake, *Medical Women: A Thesis and a History*, Edinburgh 1886 and Margaret Todd, *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*, London 1918. More recently, see Catriona Blake, *The Charge of the Parasols: Women's Entry to the Medical Profession*, London 1990 and Shirley Roberts, *Sophia Jex-Blake: A Woman Pioneer in Nineteenth-Century Medical Reform*, London 1993.

awarded the necessary certificates of attendance. Following an appeal, the university stated, with impeccable logic, that Pechey was not entitled to the scholarship for she was not a member of the class, but as a class member was entitled to the required certificate.[31] In the same year the infamous Surgeons' Hall Riot occurred when a mob of male students attempted and failed to block the women's entrance to a class in Surgeons' Hall, then disrupted the class and threatened them on their departure. According to Jex-Blake, some lecturers encouraged the students. One, requested to keep his students in late at the time of the disturbances, actually let them leave early. In 1871 a libel case was taken out against Jex-Blake over allegations she had made accusing members of the university of inciting student action against the women.[32] The Edinburgh pioneers were finally forced to leave over the issue of clinical training when the Senatus rewrote the university charter to prevent the block vote of local companies from overthrowing its decision against them.

The events in Edinburgh demonstrate all too clearly the extent of the opposition to female medical students and the threat they represented to demarcations of fe/male roles. The level of harassment they experienced indicates that they were perceived to have stepped outside the bounds of conventional behaviour to such a degree that any pretence of a chivalrous attitude towards the 'fairer' sex was deemed unnecessary. Jex-Blake states that the male students began 'shutting doors in our faces' and 'bursting into horse-laughs and howls when we approached'.[33] The harassment also included the affixing of fireworks to Jex-Blake's front door and physical and verbal abuse: 'The filthiest possible anonymous letters were sent to several of us and the climax was reached when the students took to waylaying us in some of the less-frequented streets through which we had to pass, and shouting indecencies after us.'[34] Yet an article in the *Saturday Review* criticises the women for expecting to be treated with any degree of respect at all:

> Our fair friends are really a little unreasonable. They want to fulfil that impossible desire of the childish mind, to eat their

---

31 Protest against women medical students reached its apex when women showed superior knowledge to male students. Garrett Anderson's presence at Middlesex was tolerated by the male students until she was the only student to answer a question correctly on a ward round. Subsequent to this the Memorial protesting at her presence was drawn up.

32 Jex-Blake lost the libel case.

33 Jex-Blake, *op.cit.*, p.90.

34 *ibid.*, p.111.

> cake and have it ... they want to receive the same homage and honour that were paid to them when they were content to live quietly at home ... If they will push themselves into the thick of a mêlée ... why then they must look out for hard knocks ... They set themselves down before the doors of a medical college, doggedly determined to force their way into the ranks of the reluctant students ... but they are highly offended when rebuked for their free handling of moral filth, and maintain that, being women, they should be dealt with tenderly and spoken of respectfully.[35]

Forced to leave Edinburgh unqualified, Jex-Blake (M.D. of Berne 1877) resolved, along with others, to open a medical school for women in London. With the aid of Garrett Anderson and male supporters of the female medical profession the London School of Medicine for Women was opened in 1874. Twelve students were admitted in that October. In 1893, just under 20 years later, it had grown to 143 students. During the first three years of the school's history two major problems dominated: no examining board would admit the women; and no hospital would offer the students the clinical training required.[36] The Enabling Act of 1876 removed the former problem in theory. Its practical result was seen in the successful applications by Edith Pechey and others to the King's and Queen's College of Physicians in Ireland which agreed to enter students for examinations irrespective of attendance at the college itself. The remaining problem of clinical training was resolved in 1877 when the Royal Free Hospital agreed to accept students on its wards for a fee of £400 p.a. for clinical instruction and £315 p.a. as a contribution to the general funds of the hospital.[37]

During the following 20 years, the advancement of women within the medical profession was relatively swift. In 1882 Dr Edith Shove was appointed medical superintendent of the female staff at the London General Post Office. In 1883 Dr Lucy Cradock held the same post in Liverpool, whilst 1884 saw Dr Julia

---

35 Anon., 'The Sacred Sex', *Saturday Review*, 31, (13/5/1871), 595-6.

36 Garrett Anderson was happy to permit the students to attain clinical experience at the New Hospital for Women. This was not acceptable: the hospital did not have the required number of beds; and clinical experience could not be undertaken in a women-only hospital.

37 This arrangement was abnormal: hospitals did not usually charge medical schools for permitting students to gain clinical experience and the fee demanded by the Royal Free placed a considerable financial burden upon the school.

Cock appointed medical inspector of the North London Collegiate School. By 1888 there were 60 women entered on the Medical Register and by 1890 the first women had been given appointments in a general hospital (Dr Helen Webb at the Homerton Fever Hospital) and in a medical asylum for the insane (Dr Jane Henderson at the Holloway Sanatorium).[38] By 1896 the British Medical Association, the Society of Anaesthetists, the Anatomical Society and the Medico-Psychological Society all admitted women as members. In the same year the Royal College of Surgeons resolved to admit women to degrees of the college. By this time dispensaries for women and children run by women doctors were in operation in London and other urban areas.[39] Despite this success, the legitimate entrance of women to the profession did not end the dissent. Protest and prejudice against women doctors continued. Dr Frances Hoggan gives some examples: in 1880 Dr Allen Sturges was denied a hospital appointment because he was married to a woman doctor and in 1881 the International Medical Congress excluded women from all its professional meetings.[40] Nonetheless, only 20 years after White's 1856 application to the London Senate, the legal position of women in relation to medicine had been reversed.

If the applications to the University of London by White and, later, Garrett Anderson, had been accepted this would clearly have had an immediate impact on the opening of general higher education to women. Indeed, individuals campaigning for medical women were often also associated with the campaign for female higher education and vice versa. The campaign for the higher education of women, however, began earlier and took a more diverse route. It was characterised by a combination of collective action by organisations concerned with the general status of female education, and the initiations of individuals, often supported by the collective groups.[41] The opening of the medical profession, on the other hand, was precipitated largely by the actions of individuals such as Jex-Blake and Garrett Anderson. Moreover, while women doctors had been largely rendered invisible by the nineteenth century, there were some visible nineteenth-century precedents for a

---

38 Details taken from *Reports of the London School of Medicine for Women*, London 1875 etc.

39 See *ibid.*

40 See Frances Elizabeth Hoggan, 'Women in Medicine', in Theodore Stanton (ed.), *The Woman Question in Europe: A Series of Original Essays*, London 1884, pp. 88, 83.

41 Emily Shirreff and Maria Grey, for example, were responsible for the National Union for Improving the Education of Women of all Classes. Both also wrote on female education and Shirreff was joint editor of the *Journal of the Women's Education Union.*

form of advanced education for women: attendance of women at academic lectures, for example, had begun much earlier in the century. Since 1828 some lecture courses at University College, London had been opened to, and attended by, women and Birkbeck Literary and Scientific Institution had opened its classes to women in 1830.[42] The College of Preceptors, founded in 1846, admitted women to classes in 1849. A year earlier the first 'college' for women was opened in London: Queen's College.

The foundation of Queen's College arose from the creation of the Governesses' Benevolent Institution (G.B.I.) in 1843.[43] By 1847 the idea of holding classes and offering a certificate to governesses had taken root and a Committee of Education was formed.[44] In the same year the G.B.I. acquired a house in Harley Street and in 1848 Queen's College came into being. It offered education to all females over the age of 12, with classes taught by volunteer professors, mostly from King's College, London. A year after the opening of Queen's College, Elizabeth Reid founded a college for ladies that eventually became Bedford College. Its objective was 'to provide for ladies ... a curriculum of liberal education' within an institution set up 'on the same plan as in the public Universities' with 'combined lectures, examinations and exercises'.[45] Thus, the intention was to provide a form of higher education. Yet Bedford College, like Queen's College, cannot be perceived simply as an early college of higher education for women. Its history was hybrid - for some years it remained a cross between a school and college. It was not until 1856 that a systematised course of study was enforced, in 1869 that a constitution was finally agreed upon, and in 1884 that the minimum age of entry was increased to 16.[46] Bedford College eventually, unlike Queen's, became a part of the University of London.

While both Bedford and Queen's were developing in the late 1840s and 50s, concerns about the education of boys had led to the foundation of University Local Examinations. Intended for boys who would not go on to university, they were

---

42 The University College courses were not run by the university but arranged by individual professors and held on university property for convenience.

43 For a detailed history of the college see Elaine Kaye, *A History of Queen's College, London 1848-1972*, London 1972.

44 *ibid.*, p.19.

45 'Statement Respecting the Ladies' College, Bedford Square', quoted by Margaret Tuke, *A History of Bedford College for Women 1849-1937*, London 1939, p.21.

46 For a detailed account of the development of Bedford College see *ibid.*

designed for employers wanting to assess the ability of potential employees. It was the opening of the Local Examinations to women alongside the inclusion of girls' education in the 1864 Schools' Inquiry Commission (S.I.C.) that did much to help the formation of women's higher education colleges in the 1870s. Emily Davies is to be largely credited with initiating these achievements.[47] After the universities refused to open their Local Examinations to girls, Davies set up a committee to achieve this objective. In October 1863 Cambridge agreed to permit the committee to obtain copies of the examination papers. Ninety-one girls sat the examination and only six failed. This achievement shortly preceded the establishment of the S.I.C. Davies was determined that it too would acknowledge the importance of female education.

The remit of the S.I.C. of 1864-6 was to examine pre-university education, yet, despite the numerous 'educational' establishments in existence for girls, it did not occur to the commission that these should be assessed. Davies's initial requests asking the S.I.C. to include girls' education received a discouraging response. Nonetheless, Davies undertook her own investigation into the quality of girls' education and organised a petition. The commission eventually accepted evidence from Davies and others and agreed to visit girls' schools, although only with the proviso that this would not detract from a full investigation of the education of boys. The reports from the S.I.C. were issued in 1868-9. Those relating to girls were published in a single volume with a preface by Dorothea Beale who notes that of 20 volumes of reports only one concerns girls. The reports themselves make interesting reading. They reveal not a lack of intelligence in girls but a deplorable lack of motivation and training, with girls actively discouraged from perceiving learning as a desirable trait. Mr Fitch's report, for example, states: 'It is difficult to measure the harm which is done by schoolmistresses, who, in the hearing of their pupils, speak slightingly of mental cultivation, and set before them as the great aim of life to be attractive and to make conquests.' [48] The results of the S.I.C. led to the 1870 Education Act which initiated a limited systemisation of children's education and provided for the formation of School Boards. Significantly, women were

47 Although Davies was instrumental in effecting change, others were equally committed and involved. For example, Barbara Bodichon, Maria Grey, Bessie Raynes Parkes, Emily Shirreff and Isabella Tod.

48 *Reports Issued by the Schools' Inquiry Commission on the Education of Girls. With extracts from the Evidence and a Preface by D. Beale*, London n.d., p.31.

permitted to stand for election to them. Later commissions and further legal reforms included the education of girls.[49]

Both the opening of Local Examinations to girls and the inclusion of female education in the S.I.C. made the issue of women's education a matter of public interest and concern. The fact that girls could successfully pass the same examinations as boys indicated their capabilities, while evidence that an overall lack of quality education was available for girls marked the need for reform. In terms of higher education this suggested, firstly, that there were girls who were academically capable of advanced education, and, secondly, that if women's colleges were to succeed widespread reform of girls' secondary education had to be initiated. By the late 1860s societies promoting the higher education of women had begun to appear. In 1866 Eleanor Smith organised a scheme of lectures for women in Oxford; in 1867 Anne Clough did likewise in the north of England. She also founded the North of England Council for the Higher Education of Women. The Edinburgh Ladies' Educational Association also organised lectures supported, again, by David Masson. In 1869 the Manchester Association for Promoting the Higher Education of Women was founded. Several years earlier, Davies had already come to the conclusion that the way forward was through the creation of a women's college attached to a university.

In 1869 Davies founded what later became Girton College. The enterprise began at Hitchin in Cambridgeshire with six students. The distance of Hitchin from Cambridge meant that the students were reliant on the goodwill of lecturers to journey to Hitchin, and classes had to be fitted around the railway timetable. In 1873 the college moved to a new site in Girton. That year three students sat and passed the Tripos examinations. From the beginning, Davies intended Girton to follow the traditions of the male colleges. She was determined that the students would sit the same examinations within the same time span as the male undergraduates and was not prepared to accept a different standard of study for the women. That the first students did not have the privilege of a boy's education and

---

49 For full details of the changes in the provision of girls' education in the period see Margaret Bryant, *The Unexpected Revolution: A Study in the History of the Education of Women and Girls in the Nineteenth Century*, London 1979; Joan N. Burstyn, *Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood*, London 1980; Sheila Fletcher, *Feminists and Bureaucrats, A Study in the Development of Girls' Education in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge 1980; and Joyce Pederson *The Reform of Girls' Secondary and Higher Education in Victorian England: A Study of Elites and Educational Change*, New York 1987.

therefore lacked the requisite background in, for example, classical studies, did not deter her. Her great fear was that separate examinations would lead to claims of women's inferior intellectual capabilities: they had to prove from the start that they deserved access to university education because of their equal capacity to men. Davies's beliefs seemed unnecessarily uncompromising to those who felt that limited access to advanced education in the form of separate examinations was preferable to asking for too much and creating antagonism. Davies believed that only a refusal to accept female 'privilege' would lead to a 'validated' higher education for women: 'an examination by an official body such as a university will be more readily believed in than one by any self-constituted board, however respectable'.[50] An early student summed it up:

> if we were to deserve University degrees, we were bound to obey the regulations of the University, and from the first days of Hitchin Miss Davies set before us this difficult task, all unprepared as we were. Her view was undoubtedly right, there could be no royal privileged road for women.[51]

Ironically, issues of gender did not motivate some of those in dissent with Davies. Some of the Cambridge professors who supported women's education most ardently also supported reform in the universities. While Davies was busy agitating for the right of women to be admitted to university examinations, for example, Henry Sidgwick was campaigning for their abolition. Some professors, for example, Seeley and Hort, saw the advent of the women as an opportunity to teach the topics they wanted to rather than following the Cambridge syllabus that they disliked. Louisa Lumsden, one of the first students at Girton, notes that Hort 'selected the Acts of the Apostles as his theme, St Luke's Gospel being actually the book required for the [l]ittle-go'.[52] The students eventually rebelled and Hort subsequently resigned from the executive committee. In the light of these educational differences it is not surprising that Davies refused when Sidgwick approached her suggesting that her enterprise join forces with the lecture scheme for women he was initiating in Cambridge.

---

50 Emily Davies, *Special Systems of Education for Women* (1868), reprinted in Dale Spender (ed.), *The Education Papers: Women's Quest for Equality in Britain 1850-1912*, London 1987, p.103.

51 Louisa Innes Lumsden, 'Girton College', in *The Girton Review: Jubilee Number*, Cambridge 1920, pp.7-8.

52 Lumsden, *Yellow Leaves. Memories of a Long Life*, Edinburgh 1933, p.48.

Sidgwick's Cambridge lecture scheme was eventually to become Newnham College. In its early years, unlike those at Girton, students were not required to take a course of instruction following the principles of the undergraduate degree and many of the women were 'occasional' students. In 1871 Sidgwick rented a house to accommodate women wishing to attend classes, and Clough (later Principal) agreed to run it. In 1873 the Lecturers' Association became the Association for Promoting the Higher Education of Women in Cambridge. By 1875, when the students had moved into a hall in the hamlet of Newnham, the Newnham Hall Company was founded. By this time it had become clear that adequate finance was needed to fund the college and that the fees were too low to meet costs. In 1879 the company and the association amalgamated to become the Newnham College Association for Advanced Learning and Education Among Women in Cambridge. Newnham College had come into being.

The foundation of the first two colleges for women in Oxford also arose from different objectives but of a different nature. The favourable impression of a visit to Girton College by Dr and Mrs Talbots in 1878 led to a meeting in Oxford where it was resolved to establish an anglican hall for women. A later conflict in July 1879, over the issue of religious affiliation, resulted in a splinter group that decided to open a second non-denominational hall. In October 1879 Lady Margaret Hall (L.M.H.), anglican, and Somerville, non-sectarian, both opened. As at Newnham and Girton, both had female Principals: Elizabeth Wordsworth at L.M.H. and Madeline Shaw-Lefeuve at Somerville. The first women's colleges in Oxford were run in more unified form than at Cambridge, organised under the auspices of the Association for the Education of Women (A.E.W.) which acted as a centralised body arranging lectures, tutors and providing chaperones. The A.E.W. was also responsible for women students not attached to either college but attending classes. Nicknamed 'the unattached' these students were later formally termed the 'Oxford Home Students' (1891).[53] Further colleges followed. In 1886 Wordsworth opened St Hugh's to offer a cheaper education for women unable to afford the fees at L.M.H. In 1893 St Hilda's was founded by Beale, Headmistress of Cheltenham Ladies' College, initially to give Cheltenham girls a final year in Oxford.

Outside of Oxbridge, women were gradually admitted to universities across the country. In Manchester, women were admitted to selected classes as visitors (as opposed to students) in 1875. In 1880 the foundation of Victoria University

53 The Oxford Home Students later formed St Anne's College.

recognised women in its charter and in 1883 Owens College (a constituent college) admitted women as students. The number of full-time female students was slow to rise. Mabel Tylecote notes that between 1886-1891 the average number of students was 68 with only 16 being degree students: 'half of the women students were still "ladies" who attended a single course ... [t]he "ladies" were not registered students, but possessed cards admitting them to certain lectures. The registered students were termed "women" '. [54] Nonetheless, by 1897 Manchester University admitted women to all its degrees bar medicine and engineering.[55] In Scotland, by 1872 Edinburgh University was offering ladies a 'certificate of proficiency'.[56] By 1879 St Andrew's University was conferring degrees on women but calling them Lady Licentiates, fearing ridicule if they were designated bachelors. In London, the separate examination set up for women in 1866 was succeeded by their full admission to the university in 1878 when the Senate passed a supplementary charter. Four years later, women graduates were permitted to vote in convocation. In 1883 Constance Maynard founded Westfield College, while Royal Holloway College opened in 1885.

The formal resolution of the position of women students at the University of London can be usefully compared to the experiences of the Oxbridge women's colleges, where the continuing prejudice against female learning was most explicit. As early as 1872 Davies attempted to formalise the link between Cambridge University and Girton but the university refused either to admit the students to degrees or to publish their results. By 1881 the women's colleges were officially granted access to the little-go and Tripos examinations and in 1882 a University Grace authorised the issue of certificates to women stating the class obtained in the Tripos examinations. In 1887 Agnata Ramsay's achievement in being the only student (male or female) in the university to gain a First Class Classical Tripos was widely publicised and led to renewed hope of degrees. Yet further attempts to achieve B.A. status for women failed. It was not until 1922 that women were accorded the title of B.A. and 1948 that Cambridge granted women full privileges of the University. At Oxford requests for degree status were also refused. It was not

---

54 Mabel Tylecote, *The Education of Women at Manchester University 1883 to 1933*, Manchester 1941, p.27.

55 Engineering was excluded only because it was thought no women would want to study it - when a woman applied she was accepted. Women were admitted to medicine in 1899. See Edward Fiddes, 'Introductory Chapter. The Admission of Women to Owens College', in Tylecote, *ibid.*, p.15.

56 This was in place of official degrees.

until 1920 that women were officially granted degrees and full membership of the university and 1959 that a statute promulgated in Congregation accorded the women's colleges full status - as colleges rather than societies.

Despite the grudging acceptance of women students by Oxbridge, by the end of the century the women's higher education colleges were consolidating their academic status. A considerable crossover of former students from college to college proliferated, with women graduates taking up tutorial posts in women's colleges. Mabel Taylor, for example, entered Girton in 1878 and later became Head of the Ancient History Department at Bedford College. Lilian Faithfull entered Somerville in 1883 and went on to become English lecturer at Royal Holloway College and Vice-Principal of the Ladies' Department of King's College, London. Elinor Lodge entered L.M.H. in 1890, and later became its official history tutor, Vice-Principal and eventually Principal of Westfield College. Women graduates also made significant contributions to the development of girls' education in Britain - many going on to found schools or teach in high schools.

The number of graduates who went on to work in education was certainly large. Yet the influence of the opening of higher education to women was not restricted solely to this field. The college registers of Girton, L.M.H., Newnham and Somerville show a wide diversity of future careers: assistant at the Royal Observatory Greenwich (Isabella Clemes, Newnham 1876); scientific inventor (Sarah Marks, Girton 1876); bookbinder (Irene Nichols, L.M.H. 1880); market-gardener (Anna Bateson, Newnham 1882); H.M. Inspector of Factories (Adelaide Anderson, Girton 1883); Secretary of the Women's Trade Union (Marion Tuckwell, Somerville 1885); Liberal Member of Parliament (Hilda Stevenson, Girton 1887); Secretary of the Anti-Footbinding League, China (Margaret Latter, Newnham 1888); museum curator (Annie Cole, L.M.H. 1890); and architect's pupil (Bessie Charles, Somerville 1891).[57]

1.3 The 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor'

The entrance of middle-class women into universities and medical colleges was the source of discursive speculation from the 1840s to the end of the century and beyond. Both the campaigns and the advancements achieved by them evoked continuing and considerable public interest, outrage and concern. The woman

57 See *Girton College Register 1896-1946*, Cambridge 1948; *Lady Margaret Hall Register, 1879-1920*, Oxford 1923; *Newnham College Register 1871-1950*, Cambridge 1979; and *Somerville College,*

student had the potential to be learned, scholarly, and rational; the woman doctor had the potential to pronounce diagnoses, work in the public domain, and be learned in science: both were perceived to threaten, in quite specific ways, deep-rooted, ideal demarcations of gender difference. The actual existence of the woman undergraduate and doctor generated anxiety and ambivalence in the Victorian hegemony. One obvious means of attempting to displace or dispel this anxiety and ambivalence can be seen in the cultural construction(s) of representational versions of the university-educated woman and the female doctor: the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor'.[58] From the 1870s onwards, versions of the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' appeared in newspapers, journals, cartoons, medical treatises, evangelical tracts, poems, plays and in fiction. It is with the latter that this thesis is primarily concerned. The 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' were vilified, ridiculed, pathologised, patronised, celebrated and glorified. In whatever form they appeared, inscriptions of the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' became part of the ongoing debate concerning the rightful

---

Oxford Calendar 1896-1922, Oxford 1896 etc.

58 These labels were frequently used. Sometimes the more general 'Girl Graduate' or 'College Girl' was preferred over 'Girton Girl'. This thesis uses 'Girton Girl' throughout, even when referring to fictional women located in other colleges. Girton College, more than any other women's college, remained a potent symbol of radicalism even when higher education for women was well established; the college was often constructed as a site of advanced ideals. Interestingly, in Oxford radicalism was displaced from L.M.H. and Somerville onto both Newnham and Girton. For example, Janet E. Courtney notes in *Recollected in Tranquillity*, London 1926, p.93 that her father would not have permitted her to attend either Girton or Newnham College because both were places where dangerous, advanced notions were disseminated. Courtney herself appears to have internalised this displacement of anxiety onto the Cambridge colleges: she is contemptuous of public day-schools where Cambridge-educated teachers encouraged girls to play sport and to have ambitions for a university education. Similarly, Bertha J. Johnson in 'The First Beginnings 1873-90', in Gemma Bailey (ed.), *Lady Margaret Hall: A Short History*, London 1923, pp.29-30, describes how the Rector of Lincoln College warned against women students adopting unladylike dress and thereby damaging the cause: he could 'always detect a Newnham or a Girton Girl at once' in a party of women! In Cambridge it was Girton, not Newnham, which was singled out as a site of danger. For example, Mary Agnes Hamilton in *Newnham. An Informal Biography*, London 1937, p.66 recounts a story much repeated. At a joint conference to try and attract women to the colleges, a mother 'heard first Miss Davies, whose speech was clear and audible; then Miss Clough, whose speech was neither clear not very audible'. As a consequence, she decided to send her daughter to Newnham - the more ladylike college!

place of woman, and her intellectual, spiritual, and physical capabilities: part of the debate and contestation over the meaning of 'womanhood'.

Constructions of 'Girton Girls' and 'Lady Doctors' in Victorian fiction were both interjections/participants in the Victorian medical/educational discourse on 'woman', and, simultaneously, reflections and reflectors of it. 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' novels were thus part of the process of the construction of middle-class gender ideology (ies) of the period in the sense that that ideology (ies) was, as Mary Poovey puts it, 'both contested and always under construction'.[59] She continues: 'because it [ideology] was always in the making, it was always open to revision, dispute, and the emergence of oppositional formulations'.[60] Fictional constructions of the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' played a part in the revising, disputing, contesting and constructing of ideologies of Victorian womanhood; at the same time, they evoked, expressed, and sometimes dispelled the anxieties and ambivalences generated by the way in which the educated woman was perceived to threaten both gender hierarchies and gender difference.

The emergence of the iconic figures of the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' came in response to quite specific historical events: the campaigns for, and eventual opening of, general and medical higher education for women. Indeed, the novels discussed below engage with particular, often very specific, arguments in favour or against improved educational opportunities for women.[61] This differentiates the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' from some of the other stereotypes/constructions which appeared in response to the Victorian 'Woman Question', such as the 'Independent Woman', the 'Advanced Woman', the 'Amazon Woman' and the 'New Woman'.[62] The latter figure, in particular, has received growing critical attention in the last 20 years. The 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' in fiction both pre-date and post-date the 'New Woman': it is generally agreed that the emergence of the 'New Woman' occurred in the 1880s and had run its course by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. The 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady

---

59 Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments. The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England,* Chicago 1988, p.3.

60 *ibid.*

61 For example, Annie Thomas's *New Grooves*, London 1871, is a polemic in favour of women doctors which relies on the 'delicacy' arguments. See chapter 4, pp.129-141 below.

62. For a discussion of the difference between the 'Independent Woman' and the 'New Woman' see Ann Ardis, *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism*, New Brunswick 1990, pp.16-17, p.127.

Doctor' appeared in the 1870s and continued to appear, if in transmuted form, in the first 30 years of the twentieth century.[63] Nonetheless, it is important to consider the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' in relation to the 'New Woman'.

Contemporary research has relocated 'New Woman' fiction in relation to both the literary canon and Victorian discourse on women: the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' texts discussed below need to be regarded in the light of this repositioning. Many 'New Woman' texts accord their heroines a higher education and a career and some of the texts discussed below may be considered by some to belong in the category of 'New Woman' fiction.[64] Some of the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' texts produced in the 1890s were certainly responses to, and participants in, the 1890s debate over the 'New Woman'. However, 'New Woman' texts such as Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did* (1895), with its Girton-educated heroine, are not primarily concerned with higher education: the fact that Herminia Barton attended Girton serves largely to point to her 'advanced' character. 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' texts, on the other hand, are primarily concerned with whether or not women should be educated or practise medicine. Like 'New Woman' fiction, however, novels constructing the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' are also overtly concerned with defining what womanhood is and is not: as was the 'New Woman', the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' were productions, creations, in response to both cultural anxieties *and* aspirations.[65] It should be noted, however, that it was easier to relegate the 'New Woman' to the merely fictional; the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' were so clearly linked to historical changes that it was less easy to ignore the actual existence of the university-educated woman and the female doctor.[66]

---

63 See chapter 6 below.

64 In *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel*, London 1978, p.2, Gail Cunningham writes that 'the Girton Girl and the Lady Doctor became recognised sub-groups of the New Woman species, and the financial independence and personal fulfilment gained through work began to seem attractive alternatives to marriage'. As already noted, however, the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' in fiction pre-dated the 'New Woman'. Later, Cunningham notes: '[a] fair number of New Women are Oxbridge trained' (p.46). I am indebted to Cunningham for first drawing my attention to the 'Lady Doctor' and 'Girton Girl'.

65 In *The 'Improper' Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing*, London 1992, pp.137-8, Lyn Pykett writes that the 'New Woman' 'was a representation. She was a construct ... actively produced and reproduced in the pages of newspaper and periodical press, as well as in novels'.

66 In *op.cit.*, pp.12-14, Ardis suggests that in the late 1890s the shift in focus from the 'New Woman' as someone existing in reality onto the 'New Woman' as someone appearing only in fiction was an

From a critical perspective, work on 'New Woman' fiction has greatly contributed to the opening up of literary debate: the resurrection of forgotten 'New Woman' texts and the relocation of them in relation to contemporaneous canonical texts and to cultural history has led to an increased interest in, and understanding of, other forgotten novels, often produced by women.[67]

The rediscovery of neglected 'New Woman' writers began in the 1970s with the publication of work by Gail Cunningham, Lloyd Fernando, Patricia Stubbs and Elaine Showalter.[68] The first three make their main focus male writers. Although they allude to 'minor' 'New Woman' female novelists, it is to dismiss them in terms of literary 'value' or 'failed' feminism.[69] Showalter, in a text dealing with women writers, naturally enough, pays more attention to writers such as Sarah Grand and Olive Schreiner. However, she too ultimately rejects them on the grounds of their 'failed' feminism. Nonetheless, these early publications played an essential part in defining who and what the 'New Woman' was and in beginning to outline the cultural context in which she was situated. Since the 1970s critical work dealing with the 'New Woman' has expanded (in volume) and broadened (in scope): the expansion of feminist criticism and a general academic interest in the phenomenon of the *fin de siècle* have contributed to this.[70] Four recent feminist academic studies which consider the 'New Woman' are of particular interest.

---

attempt to label the 'New Woman' as someone you do not meet in real life.

67 For example, see Valerie Sanders, *Eve's Renegades: Victorian Anti-Feminist Women Novelists*, London 1996 and Barbara Leah Harman and Susan Meyer (eds), *The New Nineteenth Century: Feminist Readings of Underread Victorian Fiction*, New York 1996. The latter, however, reveals how easy it is to reinscribe literary hierarchies even in a text working to undermine them. John Sutherland writes that '[l]ife is too short and eternity scarcely long enough to read the 197-strong output of Annie S. Swan or all the 251 works of L.T. Meade deposited in the British Library' (p. xii).

68 See Cunningham, *op.cit.*; Lloyd Fernando, *'New Women' in the Late Victorian Novel*, University Park, PA 1977; Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing*, Princeton 1977; and Patricia Stubbs, *Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel 1880-1920*, Brighton 1979.

69 Stubbs, for example, contends that '[a]lmost no heroine in late nineteenth-century fiction works' and that '[a] genuinely feminist novel must surely credit women with more forms of experience than their personal or sexual entanglements' (p.xiii). In fact, there are numerous popular Victorian novels, including some of the texts discussed in this thesis, which focus on women and work.

70 See, for example, Pykett (ed.), *Reading Fin de Siècle Fictions*, London 1996.

In 1987 Gerd Bjørhovde's study of the writing of Grand, Schreiner, 'George Egerton' (Mary Chavelita) and Margaret Harkness was published. She states that her feminist commitment can be seen in her research topic: forgotten women writers.[71] She argues that women writers of the last decade of the nineteenth century who rebelled against conventional ideas about woman's nature also tended to rebel against the form of the conventional novel, questions the usefulness of the terms 'minor' and 'major' writers and emphasises the importance of reading her chosen texts within their contexts. I have followed her in offering close analysis of novels while attempting an overview of the wider cultural context.

Ann Ardis's *New Women, New Novels. Feminism and Early Modernism*, published in 1990, also considers the 'New Woman' in relation to literary and cultural history: the focus of her book is the repositioning of 'New Woman' fiction within the genealogy of modernism. In relation to this thesis, Ardis is particularly interesting in her argument about 'extratextual circumstances'.[72] She notes that the women authors she considers do not view art as an activity isolated from history and politics, instead 'they choose not to be silent about the intertextual debate in which they participate'.[73] This is also the case for the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' texts discussed below: in constructing their heroines or anti-heroines the texts self-consciously engage in the debate concerning the medical/higher education of women. I have highlighted this intertextual debate by analysing texts in conjunction with examples from non-fictional sources. Ardis has more to offer. Unusually, she does not restrict her discussion of women writers to pro-'New Woman' novelists but includes examples of what she terms ' "boomerang" ' writing: texts which reaffirm the place of their heroines within the boundaries of acceptable 'femininity' by boomeranging them back into their 'rightful' place. [74] The inclusion of boomerang texts enables a more perceptive and broader analysis of the way in which gender ideology was contested in the period. Further, as Ardis states: 'we need to check our tendency, as feminists, to make men the villains of the histories we (re)write. We cannot afford to deny that women as well as men were acting as cultural custodians and "gatekeepers" in the 1890s'.[75]

---

71 See Gerd Bjørhovde, *Rebellious Structures. Women Writers and the Crisis of the Novel 1880-1900*, London 1987, p. ix.

72 Ardis, *op.cit*, p.4.

73 *ibid.*

74 *ibid.*, p. 155.

75 *ibid.*

Likewise, this thesis is not only concerned with texts which affirm the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' but is equally concerned with, borrowing Ardis's term, boomerang novels. However, in considering boomerang novels in this thesis, I have also attempted to emphasise their ambivalence: again, the fact that the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' had 'real life' equivalents made it hard even for boomerang fiction to deny their potential. Ardis broadens the scope in a further way. Most writing on the *fin de siècle* and the 'New Woman' asserts a focus on the 1890s. Invariably, however, the 1880s intrude. Ardis explicitly sets her debate of the 'New Woman' in the period 1883-1900: this provides a more coherent framework in which to consider developments and changes within Victorian perceptions of 'feminism'. It must be noted, though, that Ardis's list of 'New Woman' texts is rather haphazard. She includes, for example, Annie Edwardes's *The Bluestocking* (1877) and *A Girton Girl* (1885): neither of these could be described as even anti-'New Woman' novels, although both take advantage of contemporary interest in the 'Woman Question'.[76]

Lyn Pykett's 1992 study, *The 'Improper' Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing*, further broadens the scope of critical work on Victorian women writers in considering both 'New Woman' fiction and the sensation novel. In linking the two, she too demonstrates the contestation and revision of Victorian gender ideologies within literature. Pykett argues that the 'cultural significance' of the novels analysed can be found in the ways that they 'reproduce, rework and negotiate - or afford readers an opportunity to negotiate - the contemporary discourses on "woman" '.[77] Later, now writing specifically on the 'New Woman', Pykett goes on to state:

> If the New Woman was produced by the multiple contradictions that characterised late Victorian conceptions of the feminine, the New Woman writers (in varying degrees) reproduced those contradictions. However, they also ... explored them. They engaged in a complex negotiation of the available discourses on woman, which challenged, transposed and, on occasions, transformed the terms of the dominant discourse.[78]

It is my contention that fictional constructions of the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' likewise engage in a negotiation of contemporary discourse on women but that here this negotiation is specifically linked to medical and educational discourse

---

76 *ibid.*, p.206.

77 Pykett, *The 'Improper' Feminine*, p.10.

78 *ibid.*, p.142.

on 'woman'. I also share Pykett's view that it is the reproduction and negotiation of discourses which makes such texts of interest both at the time of production and to readers today.[79]

Kate Flint's comprehensive analysis of reading and the woman reader, *The Woman Reader 1837-1914*, published in 1993, also considers the sensation novel and 'New Woman' fiction. Flint's emphasis, unsurprisingly given her project, is on the representation of reading in the texts. However, of especial interest in relation to this thesis, she states: 'What ... is particularly significant about "New Woman" fiction, for the purposes of this study, is the degree to which it denied what so much of the theory surrounding women's reading insisted upon: the interdependency of mind and body.'[80] As Flint amply demonstrates, the Victorian insistence on the interdependency of the female mind and body played a crucial role in the campaigns for improved educational opportunities for women: not surprisingly, then, it is also a notion frequently reworked, affirmed, sometimes denied, in fiction constructing versions of the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor'.[81]

Critical work dealing with the 'New Woman', from Cunningham's 1978 project, to Rita S. Kranidis's 1995 study of late-Victorian feminist novels, agrees that 'New Woman' fiction is a fiction concerned with definitions of womanhood and 'femininity'.[82] Although taking different views of the texts, there is a further thread of commonality underlying critical work on the 'New Woman' which requires foregrounding. 'New Woman' fiction debates womanhood by constructing heroines or anti-heroines who defy cultural convention by their behaviour and/or beliefs, and who thus stand out against the 'norm' of womanhood. The texts are thus often concerned, implicitly or explicitly, with selfhood and individuality. Critical work on the 'New Woman' often refers to this concern with individuality. Stubbs notes that 'the struggle to acknowledge women as complete human beings with individual and

---

79 See *ibid.*, p.10.

80 Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader 1837-1914*, Oxford 1993, p.315.

81 See *ibid.*, pp. 53-70 for a discussion of the purported interdependency of the female mind and body. See also, chapters 2 and 3 below for a discussion of it in relation to the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor'.

82 Rita S. Kranidis's *Subversive Discourse: The Cultural Production of Late-Victorian Feminist Novels*, New York 1995, also considers the ways in which 1890s feminist novels challenged late-Victorian aesthetic ideology.

sexual rights was fought out to a very great extent in literature'.[83] Cunningham, referring specifically to the 'New Woman', names her '[i]ntelligent, individualistic and principled'.[84] Similarly, Bjørhovde sees the 'New Woman' as someone engaged with 'a search for selfhood, a desire to realize her own potential as a human being on an equal footing with man'.[85] Pykett, discussing representation and aesthetic debates in the 1880s and 1890s, also points out that a more general contest was occurring over 'the question of women's right to self-representation'.[86] Patricia Marks in *Bicycles, Bangs and Bloomers. The New Woman in the Popular Press* comments explicitly on female demands for education in the period. She notes that 'she [the educated woman] was not just wresting a commodity - education - away from her brothers but was also attempting to become, so to speak, the author of her own story ... [s]he was in fact entertaining the notion of an independent life, one in which she might earn her own sustenance by using her head as well as her heart'.[87] Ardis, similarly, though with more sophistication, suggests that:

> On the one hand, the New Woman's program of self-actualization is completely in keeping with the bourgeois ideology of individualism ... But on the other hand, the New Woman's claim to the right of self-definition should be recognized not simply as an expression of but as a challenge to the tradition of liberal humanism. As women articulate specific needs and desires - the desires not of 'Woman' but of *women*, of discrete historical agents - they challenge not only the bourgeois Victorian social order's prescriptive definition of 'correct' female behavior but also the pattern of thinking in hierarchically organized binary oppositions that pits men against women, 'good' women against 'fallen' ones.[88]

The 'New Woman' was threatening precisely because she proclaimed herself an individual. However, ideas about individuality in relation to hierarchical, binary constructions of gender need further discussion than they have thus far received in critical works on the 'New Woman'. Importantly, both the actual

---

83 Stubbs, *op.cit.*, p.xiv.

84 Cunningham, *op.cit.*, p.11.

85 Bjørhovde, *op.cit.*, p.3.

86 Pykett, *The Improper Feminine*, p.37.

87 Patricia Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs and Bloomers. The New Woman in the Popular Press*, University Press of Kentucky 1990, p.91.

88 Ardis, *op.cit.*, p.27. In *op.cit.*, p. 72, Flint also discusses female individuality - in relation to advice manuals.

existence of the higher-educated and medical woman, and the fictional versions, were perceived to destabilise confused and contradictory notions about gender/sexual identity and difference in relation to Victorian populist conceptions of individuality/originality. The centrality of questions about and notions of individuality/originality in relation not just to women students and doctors but also to the wider 'Woman Question' should not be underestimated: while dominant nineteenth-century discourse hierarchised gender by writing it in terms of male to female difference, equally that difference was reaffirmed by writing woman as incapable of *genuine* female to female difference; this enabled, indeed required, the positioning of man as an individual and prone to originality; and woman as lacking in individuality and originality. I refer here not to philosophical theories of selfhood but to the persistent and prevailing opaque and nebulous use of the terms individuality and originality in nineteenth-century discourse concerned with gender difference.

A typical assumption is that man is innately prone to originality, is defined 'masculine', a type (paradoxically!) by virtue of his individuality; this bespeaks his mental, spiritual, and physical autonomy and his difference not only to women but also his potential difference to other men. The originality and individuality of man is seen to be evidenced in a male power to define, to interpret, to discover, to know. Conveniently, in populist theological terms, this innate right can be traced back to creation when God bestowed on Adam the power to name.[89] Such a construction of 'man' is dependent upon 'woman' remaining positioned as lacking in individuality/originality; hence, also lacking in autonomy; and defined 'feminine' by virtue of her inability to show 'genuine' difference to other women (hence her lack of individuality/originality): put simply, women *lack* difference to other women just as they *embody* difference to men.[90] Further, often the words 'originality' and 'individuality' when they *are* applied to women take on a very specific gendered meaning which is entirely different to their signifying function when applied to men: now they attain a pejorative meaning which, in fact, serves to *negate* a female claim to autonomy and individuality/originality: a display of either in a woman signifies her irrationality, and hence her common womanhood.[91]

---

89 For a fuller discussion of this see chapter 3, pp.120-8 below.

90 Even when women are typologised in relation to the binary oppositions Ardis refers to (good against fallen) there typically remains an assumption that, for example, all women are prone to temptation by virtue of their womanhood.

91 For examples of 'individuality' in a gendered, pejorative sense, see chapter 2, pp.66-8 and chapter

References to individuality and/or originality appear frequently in the Victorian debate over the education (medical and general) of women: they were used by both proponents of educational reform and by those determined to maintain the status quo. In *Body/Politics Women and the Discourse of Science*, Mary Jacobus, Evelyn Fox Keller and Sally Shuttleworth write:

> For women, whether viewed as objects rather than subjects of knowledge or defined as the meeting point of nature and culture, scientific discourse has been especially crucial in constructing reality as something they can embody but not know. Associated alternatively with nature and with the unconscious, with matter and with mystery, the feminine body functions as the imaginary site where meaning (or life) is generated; yet, in this scheme, women can never be meaning makers in their own right. Hence the compensatory emphasis in feminist theory on the desiring and speaking feminine subject.[92]

Middle-class nineteenth-century proponents of female emancipation striving to locate themselves as individualised, autonomous subjects with rights to access to education and careers were equally attempting to be meaning-makers rather than objects of meaning: given the point made by Jacobus *et al* about scientific discourse, it is perhaps not surprising that much of the invidious reaction against both the university-educated woman and the woman doctor (the latter for more obvious reasons) is found in pseudo-scientific discourse. The woman doctor and undergraduate, whether consciously or not, intervened in the dominant signification of woman as unindividual and lacking in autonomy by disrupting the alignment of originality/individuality with the solely masculine; and by appropriating the power of assigning meaning. These women, no matter how much they denied it (as some of them did) appeared to transform themselves from women whose identity was given signification by men, into women who both signified themselves as different to the 'norm' of womanhood, and importantly, had the potential to redefine the meanings ascribed to other women. The female undergraduate, with access to knowledge of a scholarly nature, evoked the fear of a take-over of the power of discourse, of written signification. She denied the culturally constructed correlation between the production and understanding of knowledge and male individuality/originality. In similar vein, the woman doctor was, quite literally now, appropriating the female

---

3, pp.99-102 below.

92 Mary Jacobus, Evelyn Fox Keller, Sally Shuttleworth (eds), *Body/Politics. Women and the Discourses of Science*, London 1990, p.7.

body as a site of female signification. Further, the anatomically learned woman with potential control over female bodies denied notions of woman's state of innate and permanent ill-health: notions which themselves depended upon the idea of the female as lacking in individuality and autonomy.[93]

The consequences of this interruption/disruption of gendered notions of individuality, generated by the educated woman and the woman doctor, were reworked, in relation to arguments for or against women students and doctors, in fictional constructions of the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor'. This thesis identifies three categories of novels containing 'Girton Girls' and 'Lady Doctors'. However, further demonstrating Poovey's point about ideology always being under construction, few of the texts fit exclusively into the category to which they have been assigned: the very nature of the texts' subject-matter makes them open to ambivalence and contradiction. The three categories identified are 'negative', 'acceptable' and 'acceptably positive' inscriptions of 'Girton Girls' and 'Lady Doctors'.

Negative inscriptions of the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' demonstrate the danger and/or stupidity of opening previously closed doors to women. These texts reposition the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' as objects to be signified and as lacking in male individuality. The power of the 'Girton Girl' or 'Lady Doctor' to ascribe meaning is either transmuted into her uncontrolled signification as diseased and/or deformed, or replaced with her own acknowledgment of her alignment with unoriginal womanhood. Her immutable failure to be 'Girton Girl' or 'Lady Doctor' and to be acceptably 'feminine', makes the juxtapositioning of *Girl* and Girton, *Lady* and Doctor oxymoronic. The destabilisation effected by her unwomanly behaviour, or potential destabilisation inferred from her unwomanly desire for an education, becomes evidence of the need to rewrite the female in relation to a dominant, hierarchical, innate gender code. Her reinscription as mad, bad, diseased or silenced, reaffirms social stability. These 'Girton Girls' and 'Lady Doctors' have a choice: they can acknowledge their relation to invariable, docile womanhood by renouncing their claim to an education and/or career; or they can refuse to renounce this claim only to have a renunciation forced upon them by an inadvertent warping (but not total negation!) of their femaleness. Examples of these forms of the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' are considered in chapters 2 and 3. In chapter 2 the focus is on the 'Girton Girl': Annie Edwardes's *A Girton Girl* is examined in

93 For a further discussion of this see chapter 3, pp.99-102 and chapter 5, pp.200-212 below.

relation to the 1860s and 70s debate around women, education and marriage; Eliza Lynn Linton's *The One Too Many* is analysed in the context of the medical arguments against higher education for women; and Adeline Sergeant's *No Ambition* is discussed in relation to the *fin-de-siècle* debate on the role/revolt of the modern daughter. [94] In chapter 3 the 'Lady Doctor' is considered: Anne Elliot's *Dr Edith Romney* is explored in relation to the contemporaneous debate on medical ethics and women doctors; Elizabeth Thomasina Meade's *The Medicine Lady* is considered with reference to prevailing assumptions about the innate ill-health of women; and Arabella Kenealy's *Dr Janet of Harley Street* is analysed in relation to ideas about the neutering of woman through her entrance into the dissecting-room.[95]

The acceptable 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' were constructed largely as a means to dispel anxieties over the disruption of prevailing versions of docile, unindividual womanhood. Here the advantages of higher education and medical training for women are not renounced but are lauded. However, these 'Girton Girls' and 'Lady Doctors' are only able to negotiate their way to acceptance by both conforming to ideals of acceptable womanliness and by demonstrating their service to society. This creates interesting ambivalences in the texts: attempts to promote the educated woman as necessary for the social good while simultaneously writing her as the acceptable 'feminine' are inevitably contradictory. Hence, some of the contradictions and ideological confusions linked with the changing roles of women in the period are inadvertently exposed in these texts. These forms of the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' are dealt with in chapter 4: Annie Thomas's *New Grooves* is examined in relation to the 'delicacy' arguments; Hilda Gregg's *Peace with Honour* is discussed in relation to the contemporaneous arguments about the need for medical women in the colonies; and Alice Stronach's *A Newnham Friendship* is analysed in the context of personal accounts of college life by Victorian women. [96]

---

94 Annie Edwardes, *A Girton Girl*, London 1885; Eliza Lynn Linton, *The One Too Many*, London 1894; Adeline Sergeant, *No Ambition*, Edinburgh 1895. Edwardes changed the spelling of her name from 'Edwards' to 'Edwardes' to avoid confusion between her novels and those of Amelia Edwards. This thesis uses 'Edwardes' throughout.

95 Anne Elliot, *Dr Edith Romney*, London 1883; L. T. [Elizabeth Thomasina] Meade, *The Medicine Lady*, London 1892; Arabella Kenealy, *Dr Janet of Harley Street*, London 1893.

96 Annie Thomas, *New Grooves*, London 1871; 'Sydney C. Grier' [Hilda Gregg], *Peace with Honour*, Edinburgh 1897; Alice Stronach, *A Newnham Friendship*, London 1901.

The acceptably positive construction of the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' has much in common with the simply acceptable. However, there are differences. Texts constructing acceptably positive heroines permit them an overt individuality and self-proclaimed autonomy; further, these texts refuse to perceive the educated woman as purely a tool for male hegemony. While these 'Girton Girls' and 'Lady Doctors' always maintain acceptability and convention in the sense that they are ultimately located within marriage, the path they negotiate towards that marriage is one which overtly challenges ideals of passive, irrational, inferior womanhood. Moreover, the 'reward' of marriage in these texts does not entail a negation of the more non-conformist ideals espoused by the heroines throughout the texts. Indeed, marriage at the close of these texts is a reward *for* non-conforming womanhood! However, marriage is still their ultimate end. Pykett comments on 'the problems of concentrating too much on endings at the expense of the more complex middles of novels'.[97] In suggesting these texts offer acceptable, positive, and sometimes even challenging, constructions of the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor', I follow Pykett in trying to see their endings in relation to their more ambivalent middles. Acceptably positive versions of the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' are considered in chapter 5: Henrietta Keddie's *Many Daughters* is examined in relation to the 1890s debate on work versus marriage; Elizabeth Edmonds's *Mary Myles, A Study* is analysed with reference to the text's positive correlation of the female mind *and* body; Mary Gleed Tuttiet's *Sweethearts and Friends: A Story of the Seventies* is considered in relation to its rejection of the idea of innate female ill-health; and Margaret Todd's *Mona Maclean: Medical Student* is analysed in the context of the contemporaneous debate on women in the dissecting-room.[98]

The division of the texts into negative, acceptable, and acceptably positive categories enables an analysis of the complex debate in favour and against the improvement of women's educational and career opportunities. The division is not intended to be a commentary on the feminism - or lack thereof - displayed in the texts. To refer to Pykett again, I agree with her that it is not useful to impose our own ideological understanding of gender (in terms of conservativeness or

---

97 Pykett, *op.cit.*, p.50.

98 'Sarah Tytler' [Henrietta Keddie], *Many Daughters*, London 1900; Mrs Edmonds [Elizabeth Mayhew Edmonds], *Mary Myles, A Study*, London 1888; 'Maxwell Gray' [Mary Gleed Tuttiet[t?]], *Sweethearts and Friends: A Story of the Seventies*, London 1897; 'Graham Travers' [Margaret Todd], *Mona Maclean: Medical Student*, London 1892. There is uncertainty about the spelling of Tuttiet's name. This thesis refers to her as 'Tuttiet' throughout.

progressiveness) back onto Victorian texts.[99] Indeed, the choice of the terms 'negative', 'acceptable', 'acceptably positive' is an attempt to avoid labelling the texts as either conservative or radical: as already stated, all of the texts are ambivalent in the treatment of their subject; moreover, however much they ultimately reject or defend their heroines' unconventionality, all of the texts attempt to construct the 'Girton Girl' or 'Lady Doctor' in order to signify her, to know her, to explain her, to 'solve' her anxious and puzzling impact on the wider 'Woman Question' of the late Victorian period.

Initial critical interest in 'New Woman' novels focused on male writers (usually canonical) and only later turned to women writers, whereas this thesis resurrects only 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' texts written by women. There are, however, texts by male authors which feature 'Girton Girls' and 'Lady Doctors' and there is useful work to be done on these productions. In part, the decision to focus on women authors, like the decision to exclude some female authored texts containing 'Girton Girls' and 'Lady Doctors', was one of contingency.[100] There were other reasons. Like Bjørhovde, my feminist commitment is expressed in the selection of my research topic. Further, in her introduction, Pykett writes: 'It is, I hope, no longer necessary to justify the project of focusing exclusively on women's writing, or of resurrecting the forgotten texts of 'bourgeois' women novelists.'[101] From a feminist perspective, this is true. Nonetheless, she explains that other critics have dealt with male authors and that female authors have often been seen as prefigurative of male writing. She also explains that she wants to raise issues about the way in which women's writing articulates and explores difference and states that the writing under discussion:

> is marked by the writers' specific experiences as women, and by the ways in which their biological femaleness is structured and mediated by socio-cultural concepts of femininity. To this extent these women writers will be seen

---

99 Pykett, *op.cit.*, p.50.

100 Examples of excluded texts which contain 'Girton Girls' or 'Lady Doctors' include Major-General G.G. [George Gardiner] Alexander's *Doctor Victoria*, London 1881; Margaret B. Cross's *Love and Olivia: Being the Sentimental Troubles of a Clever Woman*, London 1899; Edith Johnstone's *A Sunless Heart*, London 1894; Mary Pendered's *Dust and Laurels: A Study in Nineteenth Century Womanhood*, London 1893; Charles Reade's *A Woman-Hater*, Edinburgh 1877; and Annie S. Swan's *Elizabeth Glen, M.B.: The Experiences of a Lady Doctor*, London 1895 and *Mrs. Keith Hamilton, M.B.: More Experiences of Elizabeth Glen*, London 1897.

101 Pykett, *op.cit.*, p.4.

> to reinscribe their culture's stories about femininity. However, they also participated in a rewriting of this script of the feminine.[102]

The female authors discussed in this thesis produced now neglected texts which both reinscribe and/or rewrite cultural stories of 'femininity' both in relation to medicine and higher education and in relation to populist ideas about individuality. Their 'resurrection' is an attempt to reposition them in the context of Victorian texts by women (sensation novels, 'New Woman' fiction) already repositioned within cultural and literary history by Ardis, Pykett *et al.* As far as I am aware, there is no in-depth critical study of 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' fiction.[103] However, the texts have not been analysed in an attempt to suggest that they are forgotten texts worthy of inclusion in the canon; neither is this thesis interested in the 'value' of the texts in an aesthetic sense, although some of them are certainly more sophisticated than others in their employment of narrative strategies. Neither is it the case, as Ardis and Pykett suggest about the novels they discuss, that they have a role in the development of fiction: other than in broadening the narrative possibilities for Victorian heroines and anti-heroines. Rather, the texts are discursive interjections into the debate over the education of women (medical and general) and the wider debate about the role and function of women that took place in the Victorian period; and are mediators of the ideological implications of these debates. As such, they both participated in the transmission of gender ideology (ies), sometimes further reinscribed it, and, on occasion, even displaced it.

---

102 *ibid.*, p.5.

103 Nancy Lee Sobal's Ph.D. dissertation, *Curing and Caring: A Literary View of Professional Medical Women*, University of Cincinnati 1984, examines the figure of the medical woman in North American fiction. Kristine L. Swenson's Ph.D. dissertation, *Treating a Sick Culture: Victorian Fictions of Medical Women*, University of Iowa 1995, examines the figures of the nurse and the woman doctor in British fiction. She analyses three texts considered in this thesis: *Peace with Honour*, *Dr Janet of Harley Street* and *Mona Maclean: Medical Student*. In each case, Swenson perceives the text as feminist 'New Woman' fiction. Although she makes pertinent observations about all three texts, her reading of *Peace with Honour* and *Dr Janet of Harley Street* as radical texts does not take into account their ambivalent treatment of the 'Lady Doctor'. Margaret Beetham's *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine 1800-1914*, London 1996 briefly considers constructions of the 'Girton Girl' in periodicals. Sally Mitchell's *The New Girl: Girls' Culture in England, 1880-1915*, New York 1995, discusses fictional constructions of women at work, the experiences of women at college, and, briefly, the 'Girton Girl' in fiction.

Chapter 2
Degrees of Opposition: The 'Girton Girl' Vanquished

2.1 Marriage Versus Girton

> [W]e start in this country with a confusion of terms, using education where we should properly use instruction, speaking of persons as well-educated who are simply well-informed, and the confusion of thought indicated by these misnomers runs through our whole treatment of the subject, theoretical and practical.[1]

From the late 1850s to the end of the century the debate over the (in)appropriate education of women and girls was played out repeatedly. As noted in chapter 1, this debate occurred within a context where concerns about the reformation of the education of boys and men were being aired and acted upon. From the 1850s to the early 1870s, in particular, the perceived efficacy of widening educational provision for boys and men occasioned a shift in perceptions of learning. Questions that had been asked in previous centuries and which continue to be asked to the present day were looked at anew. What does it mean to be educated? Is there a difference between education and instruction? What are the aims of education? These questions and the various answers proposed to them both reflected and contributed to the change in attitudes towards education during the period.

Not surprisingly, the answers to these questions when asked in relation specifically to women and girls further reinforced the ideological inscriptions of femaleness already written into the discourse concerned. Further, when linked to women and girls, any general debate about the meaning of the term education found itself explicitly, implicitly, consciously or unconsciously, asking and answering a question which continued to be controversial up to the end of the century and beyond: should the term education have a different signification when applied to women as opposed to men? Invariably, most responses to this question, whether coming from those in favour or against the higher education of women, appealed to the status quo by answering in the affirmative.

A concordance with mainstream inscriptions of womanliness was common in the arguments of the early campaigners for improved education for women and girls.[2] Simple deductive reasoning was often employed to suggest that female

---

1 Mrs W.M. Grey [Maria Grey], *Paper on the Study of Education as a Science*, London 1874, p.5.

2 The campaigners for the reform of women's education did not always retain 'conventional'

education meant improved womanliness: if to educate meant to educe, then it meant to draw out what was there; to educate woman was therefore to draw out her womanly nature. Thus, it was argued, the improved education of woman served merely to enhance her 'femininity' which, in turn, would benefit society. Frances Power Cobbe, for example, writing in the 1860s, claims that '[e]ducation is after all, only what its etymology implies, - the educing, the drawing out, of the powers of the individual. If we, then, draw out a woman's powers to the very uttermost, we shall only educe her *womanliness*.' [3]

Alternatively, many specifically opposed to intellectual learning in women agreed that education should educe womanliness but took issue with the *type* of education which would effect this. Typically, it was claimed that as woman's innate, true vocation was marriage, then her *appropriate* education should fit her for this function. Thus, the womanly woman, claims one such, should be '*educated for Home,* and it is a ridiculous thing to draw her from the *performance* of her duties there, that she may be ever *learning how they should be performed*'.[4] Similarly, an anonymous writer in the *Quarterly Review* posits the question '[w]hat do we want in the woman when we have educated her?'[5] S/he proceeds to argue that as '[t]he duties of women do not to any great extent lie in the intellectual direction', and as '[t]he sphere of women is home', the higher education of women and girls is inappropriate.[6] Therefore, 'do not let us establish the "University-woman" as the modern type'.[7] A writer in the *Saturday Review*, astonished at the demands that girls be permitted to take the Local University Examinations, states simply that '[t]he object for which girls are supposed to be brought up is that they may be married'.[8] Therefore, 'the time spent upon the higher branches of knowledge would be thrown away, and would merely displace hours that should be spent on training that would fit them for the duties of their lives'.[9]

---

definitions of woman's duties. For a discussion of more progressive arguments see chapter 5 below.

3 Frances Power Cobbe, *Female Education and How It Might Be Affected by University Examinations. A Paper Read at the Social Science Congress, London 1862*, London 1862, [second edition], p.8.

4 'A Womanly Woman', *Women's Rights and the Wife at Home*, London 1872, p.17.

5 Anon., 'Female Education', *Quarterly Review*, 126, (4/1869), 452.

6 *ibid.*, 465.

7 *ibid.*, 474.

8 Anon., 'Feminine Wranglers', *Saturday Review*, 18, (23/7/1864), 111.

9 *ibid.*, 112.

Reformers such as Emily Davies, Bessie Raynes Parkes, Emily Shirreff and Isabella Tod maintained that some women required higher education to train for a career other than marriage.[10] The opponents of reform remained fixed in their assumption that the genuinely womanly woman not only desired marriage but would attain it. A writer in the *Saturday Review*, for example, attacks Raynes Parkes thus:

> Miss Parkes' answer is - Educate every woman on the assumption that she never will get a husband ... Our answer is ... that, as the chances are very much in favour of every woman getting a husband, there is really no call upon us even to entertain the other hypothesis ... We say that the greatest of social and political duties is to encourage marriage ... Miss Parkes not only argues as though every woman were a possible old maid and a contingent widow, but contends that her education is to be framed to meet this, which is only an accident of life. Married life is woman's profession; and to this life her training - that of dependence - is modelled. Of course by not getting a husband, or losing him, she may find that she is without resources. All that can be said of her is, she has failed in business; and no social reform can prevent such failures.[11]

Annie Edwardes's *A Girton Girl* (1885) is a fictional exposition of the arguments which claimed that woman's innate inclination was to attain a husband rather than a 'male' education. It implicitly questions how woman should be educated, giving the answer that she should be taught that her genuine vocation is within marriage and her ultimate happiness in motherhood. In order to prove the validity of this answer to the implied question, the novel provides the reader with two main narrative strands: one demonstrates that woman's real desire is to marry and that a wish to go to college is merely a façade, a false consciousness; the other explores the education of an already married woman. The typical progression of the Victorian heroine from spinsterhood to marriage (Marjorie Bartrand's story) is juxtaposed with the progression of a secondary heroine from unhappy wife to contented wife and mother (Dinah Arbuthnot's story). Edwardes employs the simple strategy of juxtaposing the apparently 'advanced' woman with the apparently 'ideal' as a means of effecting an exploration of differing forms of female education. Ultimately, however, the narrative progression of both heroines, despite their apparent oppositional difference, serves to denote their similarity: whatever their

---

10 For a fuller discussion of this see chapter 5, pp.177-181 below.

11 Anon., 'Queen Bees or Working Bees?', *Saturday Review*, 8, (12/11/1859), 576.

difference in social status, intellectual ability or character, their attainment of happiness only through the guidance and protection of a husband signifies their commonality. This conclusion is foregrounded from the beginning of the text.

The novel opens with a predicate: ' "The foundations of Newnham and of Girton may be deep," observed Gaston Arbuthnot, in his pleasant, level, semi-American voice. "The foundations of the Gogmagog Hills are deeper! Girl wranglers may come, girl optimists may go. The heart of woman remains unchanged." '[12] Gaston goes on to assert:

> The heart of woman tends towards marriage ... This young person whom you, Geoffrey, propose to coach is probably neither worse nor better than her sisters. The man-hating story I flatly disbelieve. Marjorie Bartrand may or may not go to Girton. She is sure to prove herself a very woman in the end. (vol.1 pp.2-3)

The text thus opens with a displacement of the vicarious threat implied by its title. Girton is immediately rendered irrelevant. Whether the girl of the title is aligned with Girton or not she cannot escape her inevitable fate. Despite the individualism implicit in a desire to attend Girton, Gaston positions Marjorie as 'neither worse nor better than her sisters'. The closure of the text confirms the opening predicate: 'A finis commonplace as daylight, reader, old as the foundation of the Gogmagog Hills. Gaston's prediction was verified - Marjorie Bartrand had proved herself a very woman after all.'(vol.3 p.298)

It is the word 'woman' and the means by which the text defines it that is important. Marjorie Bartrand will learn during the course of the novel that despite her 'manly' ambitions she is defined a woman by virtue of her sameness with her sisters and by virtue of her difference to men. In between Gaston's initial assertion and the narrator's final comment, then, the text works to demonstrate that the alignment of the word Girton (perversity against the 'natural' order) with the word Girl (not yet a woman) is a signification of educational immaturity. Indeed when Geff [sic] arrives for his first meeting with Marjorie, he beholds a child:

> Turning quickly, he saw, to his pleasure, a child dressed in a white and red cotton frock, confined by a bright-coloured ribbon round the slim waist, and who advanced to him - a pair of brown, beautifully carved small hands, outheld ... a little country girl, with sun-kissed hands, innocent of

12 Annie Edwardes, *A Girton Girl*, London 1885, vol.1, p.1. All further quotations are from this edition and will be referred to in the main text by volume and page number.

> inkstains, a child's fledgling figure, a child's delightful boldness, and not one barley-corn's weight of dignity in her composition. (vol.1 pp.111,115)

This first description of Marjorie's appearance is significant. It occurs a third of the way through volume 1, in chapter 5. By this stage of the text we have already been introduced to the other main protagonists. In chapter 1 the narrator offers the reader a fairly detailed summary of the physiognomy of Geoffrey, Gaston, Dinah, even of Mrs Thorne, as a quick means of implying their characters: Gaston's eyes are close together and shifty, his dress is bohemian, his hands are like those painted by Titian or Velázquez signifying non-working, perhaps womanly hands; Geff's eyes, alternatively, 'had in them the glow of an intellect high above the level of his handsome cousin' (vol.1 pp.9-10) and his face shows signs of loyalty and strength; Dinah is likened to a Madonna, Mrs Thorne to an Egyptian Sphinx. Yet Marjorie, for the former three characters, and for the reader, remains a body yet to be read, and for Mrs Thorne one that is read incorrectly.

Given that a common method of denoting the 'diseased' nature of the 'Girton Girl' was to define her bodily appearance as an external signification of her mental aberration, this sets up suspense.[13] Indeed, Gaston's prime interest in Marjorie is in her appearance, and the reader's attention is drawn to the fact that it is, as yet, unknown. Despite this absence of evidence we are apparently given clues. Mrs Thorne tells Gaston that Marjorie ought to be pretty but makes no effort: ' "Some people call her an original. I," said Linda playfully, "go further, I call her an aboriginal." ' (vol.1 pp.39-40) The implication is clear: Marjorie, who would be flattered to be called original, is associated with the unevolved savage. Gaston now makes the typical correlation between a Girton ambition and a deformed appearance: ' "I see her with my mind's eye ... All these classico-mathematical girls," observed Gaston, "are the same. Much nose, little hair, freckles, ankles. Let the conversation be changed." ' (vol.1 p.40) The reader is positioned to read the absent Marjorie's body in the same way: her physiognomy will expose her unfeminine ambitions.

---

13 For a further discussion of the 'diseased' 'Girton Girl' see pp.49-52 below.

Our first introduction to Marjorie where we hear her expounding her academic ambitions does nothing to dispel this foregrounding, although the text still retains the mystery of her appearance. The narrator sets her up in opposition to its worthy spinster, Miss Tighe. While Marjorie stridently proclaims her intentions, Miss Tighe is the narrator's mouthpiece for a quick summary of some arguments against the higher education of women. Nature, she claims, intends women to marry; when Miss Tighe was a child 'we got as much education as society required of us' (vol.1 p.58); '[u]niversity teaching for girls' (vol.1 p.59) is a passing fashion; and finally, her *pièce de resistance*, Marjorie, in possession of a fortune, will never need to work, and therefore has no need of a higher education. Despite this conversation between Marjorie and Miss Tighe, we still have no actual physiognomic pointers to confirm our suspicions that the potential 'Girton Girl's' unnatural ambitions will be reflected in her bodily appearance. Our first introduction to Marjorie contains references only to her 'passionate eyes' (vol.1 p.61) and her 'sensitive [s]outhern face' (vol.1 p.74).

The first sight of Marjorie's body we are accorded is as the object of Geoffrey's gaze and he denotes her a beautiful child. The implication is that her physiognomy is indeed the true indicator of her genuine nature and that Marjorie herself, unable to read her own body, requires a man to define it for her. This is what she will learn in the course of the text. The alliance of 'Girton' with 'Girl' now appears ludicrous, for Marjorie appears to Geoffrey to be what she really is: the epitome of youthful innocence and beauty. This serves to define Marjorie's ambition to be a Girton *Girl* as childish, with the implication being she will grow up and grow out of this immaturity. While Marjorie claims a right to define her own identity through her ambitions, Geoffrey's reading of her body will ultimately prevail. The female mind is subordinated to the female body as the true indicator of her innate nature:

> Geff Arbuthnot thought that a girl with a head so graceful, with eyes so blue, with soft brow ... might be content amidst the flower-scents and cedar shades of Tintajeux Manoir, content to let Euclid and Greek particles go - to be a woman, to accept the homely, happy paths wherein women may walk unguided by exact science, or the philosophy of the ancients. (vol.1 pp.123-4)

Here, again, is the key word: woman. The dislocation between Marjorie's appearance as innocent child and her ambitions to educate herself are in fact evidence of her youthful ignorance. Comically, the narrator draws our attention to

this when Marjorie attempts to cut flowers for Geff's non-existent wife, and because she is too 'short' injures her hands: ' "The result of over-vaulting ambition." Thus from his calm attitude of six-foot one, Geff moralised.' (vol.1 p.142) Even Dinah perceives that Marjorie's extraordinary pronouncements about her desires for the future are the words of a child: ' "Strong-minded!" Dinah ejaculated with horror. "At your age, with all the sweet happiness of life to come, you talk, as though you approved such things, of being strong-minded?" ' (vol.2 p.123)

The reader is positioned by the narrator to read Marjorie's desire to become a 'Girton Girl' as her attempt to sublimate her fear of becoming a woman. The genesis of her fear is apparently an earlier betrayal by a man she *thought* loved her but who was only interested in her wealth. This betrayal leads her to reject marriage and to seek 'manly' education. However, the text also implies that it is her fear of relinquishing her control over her own identity and her difference to other females that are also reasons for her disavowal of marriage. Marjorie's anti-marriage stance is a false and vain reasoning which she uses to attempt to reject emotion - the appropriate female sphere of experience. Indeed, the reader learns early on that Marjorie's academic capabilities are limited. She lacks the necessary male discernment which would render them useful:

> Marjorie Bartrand's attainments were to the last degree patchy and scrappy; the typical attainments to be looked for in a quick, self-willed child, indifferently taught by a succession of teachers, and whose faulty studies had been supplemented by an avid, indiscriminate consumption of good books. 'Your classics are weak, Miss Bartrand ... But your classics are stronger than your mathematics.' (vol.1 p.122)

It is made clear, then, that Marjorie's ambitions are no genuine threat to hierarchies of intellect and by the close of volume 1 the superiority of 'manly' wisdom has already begun to permeate her false consciousness. Having asked Geoffrey whether he will obey her if she orders the return of her ribbon, his agreement is an apparent signification of her power. Yet Marjorie is beginning to yield to her suppressed emotional impulses: 'Geoffrey Arbuthnot - what Geoffrey Arbuthnot thought of her, what Geoffrey felt towards her - these were the questions burning in Marjorie's soul, transforming her ... from a child to a woman' (vol.1 p.297). To become a woman, then, is to become concerned not with controlling definitions of your own identity but with how others - men - signify/perceive you. When the ribbon is returned 'Marjorie Bartrand's illogical heart owned Geoffrey as its master' (vol.1 p.301). By the end of volume 1 the future 'Girton Girl' has been

inscribed by the narrator in terms which define her alongside all other women - as ruled by the 'illogical heart' which owns a man 'as its master'. Gaston's prediction, in one sense, has already been realised. However, while the reader may have discerned this, Marjorie herself has yet to internalise the lesson.

Volume 2 of the novel focuses largely on the secondary plot but Marjorie's appearances in the text show that her transformation into woman is not yet complete for she still retains a desire to be different to other women. Her ambition to attend Girton is now further exposed as a desire to appropriate 'masculine' qualities in a childish and futile desire to command and control: 'power is my ideal of happiness. I want to rule ... to be needed on all sides, sought after, distinguished - to see my name in print' (vol.2 p.124). To be needed, sought after and published are all means of affirming her identity as different to others, as elevated, as individual and original.

Marjorie's transformation from future 'Girton Girl' into woman requires the painful acknowledgment that without Geff her identity is meaningless, and thus that she is indeed the same as other women. Her relocation in an acceptable female sphere occurs only after she has acknowledged the importance of emotional experience above (false) reason. The extremity of her learning process is highlighted in several ways. Marjorie has jettisoned her future with Geoffrey because of her childish belief that genuine love can only occur once. She cannot accept that he can love her as a unique woman if he has loved another before her - another example of her pretensions to individuality. On acquiescing to his perspective she can finally negate her own sense of false self-importance. Aware of what she has lost and about to visit Cambridge, Marjorie is uncertain what to do if she meets Geoffrey. The narrator tells us: 'These were not questions she could propound to her Girton coach ... who had recently come out well in two Triposes. Cassandra Tighe, with her lowlier range of thought, stood nearer to one, Marjorie felt ... in such ... perplexities as belong to love and lovers' (vol.3 pp.225-6). Miss Tighe is earlier described as having a memory 'in a chronic state of jumble' (vol.1 p.65), which leads her to make dangerous assumptions. Ultimately, it seems, Miss Tighe's mind is to be read as indicative of the state of all appropriately educated female brains. While her reasoning processes are flawed her emotional/intuitive capabilities are keen: it is Miss Tighe who perceives and alleviates Dinah's misery on the boat. She is thus more capable of advising Marjorie on what really matters - relinquishing pride to admit love of a man - than a Girton graduate is. Genuine womanly knowledge indeed!

When Marjorie finally arrives at Cambridge in a position to achieve her ambition, her thoughts are only of Geoffrey. Her desire for 'manly' education is dispelled as soon as a reconciliation with him is possible. The closure of the text shows her happily renouncing her former childish ambition and replacing it with her genuine vocation, marriage. 'Can you give up everything for me?' (vol.3 p.298) Geoffrey asks hopefully, adding, in order to emphasise the complete inversion of her former desires, '[y]our dream for years has been Girton. Do you desire still to become a Girton student, or - ' (vol.3 p.298). The ellipsis enables Marjorie to demonstrate the extent of her appropriate womanly education. Geff's reward is her emphatic disavowal of her former false ambition as she finally recognises that her identity is given true meaning by subsuming it in his: ' "I desire that you shall guide me," was the prompt answer. "I need no other life, no other wisdom, no other ambition than yours." ' (vol.3 p.298) Earlier in the text Marjorie asserts a desire to be permitted to develop her mind to its full potential: 'May I not want to bring myself, Marjorie Bartrand, up to the highest improveable point as a human being?' (vol.1 p.61) The closure of the novel reveals Marjorie's 'highest improveable point' to be losing her pride to accept the guiding protection of Geoffery. Despite the expectations evinced by the title, then, Marjorie never becomes a *Girton* Girl. Instead she becomes a woman.[14] Without engaging in any detailed debate about the efficaciousness of higher education for women the text manages to render the notion of Girton absurd by designating it childish. The answer to the question of how women should be educated is now clear: they should be taught to understand that appropriate education is attained through accepting the guidance of men and and learning to reject both Girton and girlhood.[15]

Marjorie's progression in the text from potential 'Girton Girl' to woman is a simple strategy of reiterating the genuine desire of the appropriately educated women. However, the text's exploration of the education of women also works on another level through its juxtapositioning of the story of Marjorie's false proclivity for

---

14 Bjørhovde mentions the text in passing in *Rebellious Structures. Women Writers and the Crisis of the Novel 1880-1900*, London 1987, p.4. She suggests it was entitled *A Girton Girl* to entice the reader who then finds no concern with the 'Woman Question'. If the choice of title was intended to entice, it indicates the extent to which the cultural construction of the 'Girton Girl' had infiltrated social consciousness.

15 Beetham provides a pertinent account of the use of the word 'girl' in conjunction with 'Girton'. She also provides interesting examples of 'Girton Girl' stories in periodicals. See *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine 1800-1914*, London 1996, pp. 135-8.

academic learning with the story of an already married woman. It is never in doubt that the central premise of the novel remains the inviolate truth that woman's vocation is marriage. However, the text's discussion of 'ideal' forms of female education to render this institution secure becomes confused by its own acknowledgment of the disparity between cultural definitions of 'ideal' female behaviour and the actual working out of gender hierarchies within social structures. Throughout the text, either through their speech and actions, or through narratorial comment, we are invited to observe Dinah and Marjorie as examples of two forms of womanhood. Marjorie's ideal notion of happiness is to have power, Dinah's is to obey. While Marjorie rejects marital happiness, Dinah is too reliant on her husband for her contentment. While Marjorie claims for herself the right to a 'manly' education, Dinah acknowledges her intellectual inferiority. Yet, while Dinah and Marjorie are apparently presented as two poles of womanhood, the 'ideal' and the 'advanced', this technique is undermined. Ultimately, the exaggerated ideality of Dinah's nature proves as dangerous as the unwomanly desires of Marjorie: neither the purported 'advanced' nor the purported 'ideal' woman gains happiness before receiving an appropriate education.

Dinah's positioning as the 'ideal' woman is almost caricature. She has married for love, submits willingly to her husband's wishes, perceives herself as inferior and idolises Gaston's work: she lives and gains happiness only through her husband's presence and approval. Yet, despite conforming to a version of the 'ideal' woman most applauded in the pages of the *Saturday Review*, Dinah's marriage is not a happy one. Moreover, her unhappiness appears to derive from her adherence to notions of female ideality. Indeed, the text's treatment of Dinah as 'ideal' is accompanied by an ironical acknowledgment of the problems inherent in such a position. Thus, although Dinah is 'in truth, a very ideal of sweet and gracious motherhood' (vol.1 p.15) and although she is described as a Madonna, she is in fact childless. Moreover, her working class background, her lack of *savoir faire* concerning social etiquette, and her womanly behaviour place her at a disadvantage. She receives no social visits and her husband, in another ironic exaggeration of notions of 'ideal' female behaviour, excuses his inattention to her by reminding himself that woman's place is in the private domain, man's in the public: 'During the years of his married life it had grown to be a matter of course that Dinah, dear good girl! should never go into the world, that even the form of hesitation at leaving her had been dropped by Gaston' (vol.1 p.54).

Dinah's unhappiness, ironically, is derived from the fact that her husband does not appreciate the 'ideal' of womanliness which she embodies.[16] Thus, Gaston admires her beauty and enjoys her automatic approbation of his third-class artistic endeavours. He recognises her submissive status as a complement to his superiority. Yet he is irritated by her expectations that he will accord her protection and is bored by what he calls 'the eternal domestic duo without accompaniment' (vol.2 p.11). Dinah's submission to his wishes and feeding of his ego are not strong enough attractions to keep him at her side. The excitement of a liaison with someone who detects innuendo, plays the social game of sexual flirtation, and panders to his dilettante and pretentious notions about art, is more enticing than the appeal of an 'ideal' wife. Thus, despite her ideality, she is not, paradoxically, an *ideal* wife to Gaston. Dinah, ironically, has internalised official versions of womanly behaviour *too* well. Believing a woman's happiness is within marriage, protected by the superiority of her husband, the narrator informs us that '[h]er affections were centred painfully - I had almost written morbidly - on one subject ... Mr. Gaston Arbuthnot, her husband' (vol.1 p.16). She has no other interests apart from cross-stitch: 'No books, no languages, no music; only cross-stitch, the counting of canvas threads, to fill one's existence and one's heart.' (vol.1 p.231) In contrast to Marjorie's vivacity and determination, Dinah appears almost a pathetic figure. She progresses in the text, however, from marital ignorance and unhappiness to contentment as wife and mother. Unlike Marjorie, Dinah does not need to learn that woman's vocation is marriage. She does need to learn how to employ the gendered difference between herself and her husband to enhance their marital relationship. Ironically, Dinah's educational process in the text encompasses and exemplifies contemporaneous debate about the appropriate education of women for marriage from both those in favour *and* against the higher education of women.

For those intent on maintaining hierarchical notions of gender, an emphasis on the complementary nature of male and female roles provided a paradigm for determining the type of learned woman a husband desired. What a man needed and wanted in marriage, it was asserted, was difference:

> Since ordinary households consist of men and women, whose constant exchange of services and interaction of functions make the whole into an organism, it is reasonable to think that that education is best for the two sexes which emphasizes difference rather than that which obliterates it.

16 There are similarities here with Moira Brabazon. See p.64 below.

> A man, generally speaking, will be far less prone to admire and to respect a woman whose mental training resembles his own than a woman who sees things which he does not, who takes a view of the world which is not like his own but complementary to it, who has different thoughts and ideals from his. [17]

Male intellectual capabilities, unsurprisingly, were typically seen to lie in objectivity, rationality, retention of facts and the ability to analyse them; the female mind was seen as prone to emotion and intuition. George J. Romanes, for example, argued that while men discern the depths, women discern superficially.[18] Clearly what was claimed as 'complementarity' was also written as a rightful hierarchy of intellectual difference. Romanes, for example, writes: 'In actual fact we find that the inferiority [of women's intellectual power] displays itself most conspicuously in a comparative *absence of originality*, and this more especially in the higher levels of intellectual work.' [my italics] [19] The qualities required in a wife, therefore, were not an ability to engage with the mental pursuits of the male and talk with a husband about classics, but an awareness of a different type of 'intelligence', preferably one designed to render the home a welcome sanctity for its head:

> A girl may be a sound Grecian, a brilliant mathematician, a sharp critic, a faultless grammarian, yet be wanting in all that personal tact and temper, clear observation, ready sympathy, and noble self-control which make a companionable wife and a valuable mother ... Modern men want intelligent companions in their wives ... But do the mass of men want the specialized companionship of a like education? Does not human nature rather desire a change - the relaxation of differences? - and do specialists want to be always talking to their wives of literature, art, science, medicine, law ...?[20]

The answer to the latter question, according to some reformers, was yes. While still conforming to dominant ideology by acknowledging that female education should take into account the fact that most women marry, the conclusions drawn from such a premise were somewhat different. It was claimed that women should

---

17 Anon., 'Women at Oxford and Cambridge', *Quarterly Review*, 186, (12/1897), 538-9.

18 George J. Romanes, 'Mental Differences Between Men and Women', *Nineteenth Century*, 21, (5/1887), 655.

19 *ibid.*

20 Eliza Lynn Linton, 'The Higher Education of Woman', *Fortnightly Review*, 40, n.s., (10/1886), 504-505.

be educated to the highest degree precisely because they would then be able to converse companionably with their husbands. Mrs Sidgwick, as late as 1897, tactfully (if with her tongue in her cheek) states:

> there seem to be ... two ideals of married companionship, some persons preferring similarity of tastes and occupations, and others contrast - some especially desiring intellectual sympathy and comradeship, and others the repose of complete change of ideas in domestic converse; and I think no sensible person would wish to enforce either ideal to the suppression of the other ... By educating all girls on the old plan ... and keeping them at home, we may save the man who wants diversity from any danger of marrying a woman educated like himself; but the man who wants sympathy in intellectual work has less chance of finding his ideal wife.[21]

The Arbuthnots' relationship embodies both sides of this debate over the ideal education of women for marriage. The difference between Dinah and Gaston's intellectual prowess is pronounced and the text *apparently* presents this difference in their education and mental characteristics as the cause of unhappiness in Dinah: her lack of education prevents her from making her husband happy. Dinah has come to believe that her ignorance is causing Gaston to seek company other than her own. At the start of the text she states quite simply, and without embarrassment: 'I know nothing about intellect, except what I hear from Geoffrey and my husband. I am quite uneducated myself.' (vol.1 p.36) Later, Dinah becomes increasingly disenchanted with the extent of her ignorance. Her growing cognisance, ironically of her own ignorance, leads her to a previously hidden knowledge of the dangers lying within human relationships. Her edenic existence is forcefully relinquished when she applies her own experiences to the story of Robert Browning's 'James Lee's Wife'. Unable to understand it prior to her marriage, she now finds herself reading and re-reading it, and through emotional and experiential intuition finds comprehension:

> 'Uneducated people can like only when they feel. And in those young days ... I felt so little. But I have an object, now, in learning. I want to learn on all subjects, out of books as well as from life ... '
> 'Why, I distinctly remember your pronouncing "James Lee's Wife" to be meaningless.' [said Geoffrey.]

---

21 Mrs Henry Sidgwick [Eleanor Mildred], *University Education of Women. A Lecture Delivered at University College, Liverpool in May 1896*, Cambridge 1897, pp.112-13.

> 'I have my lesson - shall understand,' said Dinah.' "James Lee's Wife" is the story of a woman whose heart is broken.' (vol.2 pp.78-81)

The nature of this education may seem appropriate for a woman, as it is emotional and intuitive. Yet it is made explicit that this learning is damaging. Dinah's initial assertion concerning her lack of education and her contentment at learning only through Gaston and Geoffrey is replaced by false deductions and repeated affirmations about her own ignorance and thus her need to attain knowledge. Dinah now attempts to define her own ignorance/education. As with Marjorie, if in an inverse form, even by defining herself ignorant, Dinah is failing to permit herself to be defined by men. She fails to see that her lack of education is part of her womanly charm and comes to believe that her lack of intelligence is destroying her marriage: 'If only she had been his equal, intellectually! If she could have supplied him with the mental companionship he needed, or interested him in his childless fireside! Ah, could she thus have risen to his level, Gaston's heart had been in her keeping still.' (vol.2 p.162) Ironically then, Dinah comes to take the stance of those in favour of female education: that the best marriages are based not on difference but on equality of mind.

The inappropriateness of this in relation to Dinah's character, however, is made clear. We are told that she has 'a child's instinct for friends and for enemies. She liked, she disliked, unerringly, and was too transparently honest to mask her feelings' (vol.2 p.171). When behaving naturally Dinah reveals her appropriate learning. Her natural womanliness drives her finally to retaliate politely yet firmly against Mrs Thorne, reprimanding her for her flirtation with Gaston. It is Dinah, ironically, who understands that genuine female fulfilment lies 'between four lowly walls ... filled with the care of others' (vol.2 p.125). Her exposure to her own intellectual inferiority is likened to the biblical fall: 'She had learnt her lesson over-well, had eaten of the tree of knowledge, would walk in Eden at her lover's side no more.' (vol.3 p.16) Dinah's fall into knowledge leads her to make errors of judgment. Once protected by her innocence and contentment within the home, she comes to realise 'that there was a wide world lying outside her own narrow lot' (vol.3 p.88). Having been brutally initiated into the public world without the protection of her husband, she now attempts to read its codes herself, rather than having them read for her. This reveals a fatal womanly flaw: an inability to interpret signs correctly. Opening the package intended for Geoffrey, from Marjorie, and believing it to be for Gaston, from Mrs Thorne, she defines the ribbon and the one word (repentance) as evidence of her husband's infidelity. She now contemplates an inherently 'irrational'

act based on this evidence. She will leave her husband because now she realises there will always be 'ladies born and educated' (vol.3 p.204) who will entice him away from her.[22]

Dinah's folly is averted by the intervention of Geoffrey and by Gaston's acknowledgment that he loves her. A year later Dinah's educational progress is affirmed. Interestingly, the blame for her former unhappiness is now transposed entirely onto Dinah. The narrator's treatment of Gaston throughout the majority of the novel is such that the reader is encouraged to blame him for neglecting Dinah and for failing to appreciate her worth above Mrs Thorne's. Having constructed an image of Dinah for himself as the 'ideal' woman he fails to fulfil his male role of revering and protecting that ideal. As the narrator points out: 'If pure-faced Madonnas commanded the worship yielded to them of old, no need to go further than ... his own Dinah. But pure-faced Madonnas in the nineteenth century are for the first-class sculptor. Gaston belonged to the dilettante third-rate men' (vol.1 p.31). It is Geoffrey who protects Dinah, who perceives her worth, and who encourages her to undertake philanthropic work to sublimate her unhappiness.[23] Nonetheless, by the close of the text the blame has been displaced onto Dinah, by Dinah herself. Her earlier behaviour 'deserved the heaviest punishment ... [j]ealousy, such as mine was then, means selfishness, not love' (vol.3 p.243). Importantly, Dinah now thinks 'it no grievance that her husband should join the Florentine Artists' Club, or spend a portion of every evening in other society than hers' (vol.3 p.253). Her unhappiness was caused not by husbandly neglect or her inability to relate to her husband on an intellectual level but by her former false signification as Madonna. That is, her former failure to attain the status she is accorded by the close of the text: motherhood. Once acquired, the difference between their intellect/education creates harmony.

At the start of the novel Geoffrey's reply to Dinah's comment 'I am quite uneducated' (vol.1 p.36) was: 'A good many interpretations may be put upon the word "uneducated" ' (vol.1 pp.36-7). Those interpretations are ultimately to be made not by women but by men. Indeed, whenever women attempt to interpret signs, whether verbal or material ones, they invariably make false assumptions: Miss Tighe believes Geoffrey is married to Dinah, Marjorie doubts Geoffrey's love, Dinah

22 Dinah comes from the rural lower middle class.

23 Geoffrey's continued feelings for Dinah remain ambiguous. Marjorie's apparently childish offence that he once loved another woman is qualified by this.

mis-reads the ribbon and one word. When the truth about the latter emerges Gaston rebukes Dinah: 'And could you believe - in the full possession of your reason, wife - that this package was meant for me?' (vol.3 p.247) Dinah's answer connotes her genuine nature: 'I never stopped to reason' (vol.3 p.247). While Gaston may be blamed for failing to protect her from her irrationality in the first place, this serves merely to highlight once more that the female mind is prone towards emotion, not reason. It is, after all, Gaston who has the perspicacity to note from the beginning that the aspiring 'Girton Girl' will 'prove herself a very woman in the end' (vol.1 p.3).

2.2 The 'Girton Girl' and Physiology

Edwardes's novel renders the notion of Girton absurd - a topic almost too banal and humorous to be taken seriously - and in doing so it adheres to arguments claiming that higher education for women is unnecessary because they can never escape an innate nature which yearns for marriage. If, for those opposed to female emancipation, the education of woman was to fit her for marriage, and if a fitting education for marriage was one characterised by its difference to a male education, then it followed that failure to adhere to this form of womanly education would have serious consequences. *A Girton Girl* delineates the education of two heroines who are accorded fulfilment. Yet for Marjorie this is possible only because she never attains the status of 'Girton Girl'. The text thus has no need to deal with the purported damaging effects of higher education on either the women who acquired it or on society as a whole. However, as intimated earlier, one of the most popular constructions of the 'Girton Girl' was as a woman diseased and deformed - in body, mind and/or spirit - as a consequence of her higher education.

Davies *et al*, arguing for the opening of higher education and against claims that women could not succeed in improving their mental capabilities, suggested, sensibly, that without affording them the opportunity to do so female capabilities could not be properly judged: 'All we claim is that the intelligence of women, be it great or small, shall have full and free development.'[24] In reply, it was claimed that perhaps women *could* develop their intellect but *should* they, given the projected consequences? 'Scientific' discourse, in particular, was quick to construct a version of the 'Girton Girl' as a woman irrevocably diseased in mind and body through an education ill-suited for her physiological framework. Much scare-mongering arose

24 Davies, 'On Secondary Instruction as Relating to Girls' in *Thoughts on Some Questions Relating to*

from the so called American experience, inscribed in Dr Edward Clarke's *Sex in Education* (Boston 1874) which claimed dire consequences for the educated woman, in particular when co-educated with boys/men.[25] The 'evidence' was rejected by American writers.[26] Yet British scientists swiftly appropriated it for application to the emerging and existing women's colleges in Britain. Dr Henry Maudsley's article in the *Fortnightly Review* (1874) draws heavily on Clarke to argue that the period of most educational strain for girls/women is just that time when their sexual development needs most gentle nurturing; that mental exertion can only have a corresponding physical (read reproductive) consequence; that 'sex' is mental as well as biological; that it is this mental difference which fits women for reproduction and childcare and to be helpmeets to men; that mental competition may lead to insanity in women; and, drawing particularly on Clarke's 'evidence', that ultimately the consequence of the 'over' education of girls and women may be a mental, physical and moral collapse:

> the consequences of an imperfectly developed reproductive system are not sexual only; they are mental. Intellectually and morally there is a deficiency, or at any rate a modification answering to the physical deficiency; in mind, as in body, the individual fails to reach the ideal of a complete and perfect womanhood ... You may hide nature, but you cannot extinguish it. Consequently it does not seem impossible that if the attempt to do so be seriously and persistently made, the result may be a monstrosity - something which having ceased to be woman is yet not man.[27]

Women, 1860-1908, Cambridge 1910, p.73.

25 See Edward H. Clarke, *Sex in Education; or a Fair Chance for Girls*, Boston 1874.

26 See, for example, Mrs E.B. Duffey [Eliza Bisbee], *No Sex in Education; or, an Equal Chance for Both Girls and Boys, Being a Review of Dr E.H. Clarke's 'Sex in Education'*, Philadelphia 1874; William B. Greene, *Critical Comments Upon Certain Special Passages in the Introductory Portion of Dr. Edward H. Clarke's Book on 'Sex in Education'*, Boston 1874; Julia Ward Howe (ed.), *Sex and Education. A Reply to Dr. E.H. Clarke's 'Sex in Education'*, Boston 1874.

27 Henry Maudsley, 'Sex in Mind and in Education', *Fortnightly Review*, 15, n.s., (4/1874), 477. The idea that mental competition would lead to female insanity was a common myth prior to the claims of Clarke and Maudsley. For example, in 1862, Richard Holt Hutton, writing in favour of improving girls' education, emphatically states that they must not take the same examinations as boys for 'we should have half the young women in the country in brain fever or a lunatic asylum if they were to ... try for it'. See Hutton, *The Relative Value of Studies and Accomplishments in the Education of Women. A Lecture, Intended as a Contribution Towards Determining the True Intellectual Standard of Female Education in the Middle Classes*, London 1862, p.34.

Maudsley's claims occasioned a reply from Garrett Anderson, rejecting his and Clarke's arguments, and a discussion of the arguments of all three doctors in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*.[28] Some of the arguments for and against improved education became obsolete once girls/women had begun to benefit from legal and social changes.[29] However, the contention that the higher education of women led to a physical, moral and mental deformity continued throughout the century. In the 1880s, for example, T.S. Clouston, John Thorburn and Withers Moore all continued to argue that excessive education for women led to loss of reproductive health:

> Excessive work, especially in youth, is ruinous to health, both of mind and body: excessive brain work more surely so than any other. From the eagerness of woman's nature, competitive brain work among gifted girls can hardly but be excessive, especially if the competition be against the superior brainweight and brain-strength of man ... her reproductive system will more or less have been atrophied; she will have lost her womanhood's proper power.[30]

The stereotype of the deformed 'Girton Girl' was not confined to scientific writing. Even some at the forefront of educational change internalised the mythical notion of an unsexed, strong-minded woman graduate. Maria Grey, for example, writes that 'some ... young women ... approach in dress, manners, language, and even sports ... their male companions ... [t]his affectation of *mannishness* ... prevails ... among those who should know better ... I hold it an utterly mistaken view of woman's position in relation to man'.[31] Terrifying accounts in periodicals told of

---

28 See Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, 'Sex in Mind and Education: A Reply', *Fortnightly Review*, 15, n.s., (5/1874), 582-594 and anon., 'Sex in Mind and Education: A Commentary', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 115, (6/1874), 736-749.

29 For example, once women had matched male undergraduates in university examinations it was pointless to assert that improved education for women was unnecessary because they lacked the suitable mental agility.

30 Withers Moore, from his speech at the 54th annual meeting of the British Medical Association, reported in *The Lancet*, 2, (14/8/1886), 315. See also T.S. Clouston, *Clinical Lectures on Mental Diseases*, London 1883 and John Thorburn, 'Female Education from a Physiological Point of View' in *Six Introductory Lectures Delivered in the Medical Department of the Owens College, Manchester, May 1884.*, Manchester 1884. Alternatively, Sidgwick's *Health Statistics of Women Students of Cambridge and Oxford and of Their Sisters*, Cambridge 1890, p.91, concludes that higher education is not 'specially injurious to the constitution of women' .

31 Grey, *Last Words to Girls on Life in School and After School*, London 1889, p.210.

encounters with college women whose appearance and behaviour further validated the scientific version of the deformed graduate. Marie Correlli, for example, having set the reader up with some sarcastic commentary on an educational system that crushes 'feminine' qualities, dramatically recounts her meeting with a Girl Graduate:

> Only twenty-four! I should have thought her at least forty. Pale and sallow, lanky and awkward ... a high forehead on which there were already many wrinkles ... she had scarcely anything to say for herself ... She cannot mend her own clothes, she does not know how to darn a stocking, and she hasn't any idea of cookery or housekeeping - but she can read Homer![32]

Correlli's absurd description of the woman graduate, purporting to be a factual account, is similar to the negative construction of the 'Girton Girl' in Eliza Lynn Linton's *The One Too Many* (1894). Here, all the claimed negative effects of higher education on women converge and are exaggerated in an unintentionally comic mode. Linton constructs not one but four 'Girton Girls', all exhibiting one or more qualities denoting the perilous effects of their deluded and dangerous claim to intellectual, social and moral independence. The text has points in common with *A Girton Girl*, in its exaggerated contrast made between the 'ideal' and the 'advanced' woman, and in its exploration of the effect of education on marriage. However, Linton's text offers a more vicious, and for the modern reader entertaining, denunciation of the 'Girton Girl'. Paradoxically, the narrative strategies employed, while leaving no doubt that her 'Girton Girls' are not to be taken as role models, also work against the text's aims: the vivid and convincingly drawn portrait of the sadistic and brutal Lancelot Brabazon who terrorises his beautiful and 'ideal' wife is more effective in denouncing Victorian conceptions of fe/male relations within marriage than is the text's attempt to transpose the blame onto the diseased Girton quartette.

The One Too Many, like Edwardes's text, foretells its own ending from the beginning: the novel moves inexorably towards the suicide of Moira, the novel's symbol of a once revered and idealised form of 'femininity' now threatened with extinction through the advent of the 'Girton Girl'. The primary focus of the text is on an exploration of the 'natural' link between biological sex and 'biological' intellect, (Clarke's sex in mind and body) and the perversion of this link through male 'effeminacy' and brutality (Brabazon) and female unsexing in mind and body (the

32 Marie Correlli, 'The Girl Graduate', *Theatre*, 2, (1/11/1883), 247-8.

'Girton Girls'). Not merely concerned to show the damaging effects of such perversion on the individuals concerned, the critique of both unmanly man and unwomanly woman reveals the real scapegoat and victim to be the dutiful and innocent 'ideal' woman, powerless against the devouring force of the *fin de siècle*.

The four 'Girton Girls' (Effie, Laura, Julia and Carrie) are constructed as caricatured versions of the emancipated, educated woman. The narrator mocks their college education and their subsequent behaviour, clearly derived from this malicious influence, to a hyperbolic degree. All four 'Girton Girls' smoke, drink, swear, sit in unladylike ways, talk freely about unwomanly topics and the narrator tells us frankly:

> Their semi-masculine education had done these mentally unsexed girls so much good that they were able to bear chaff and opposition without 'flying,' as the less disciplined are wont to do when scratched with a pin in discussion ... These four were in a sense like boys ... *these girls indeed knew far too much for their own happiness or the grace of the sex;* and simplicity of soul was one of the virtues they had lost. [my italics] [33]

The hazardous risk of acquiring too much knowledge is a central premise of the text. It is made clear from the start that the four 'Girton Girls' as a group have been taught by their education to strive to behave like men. Yet the derisory narrative comment 'semi-masculine education' implies that their intellectual abilities can never attain 'masculine' heights because of an innate lack of 'real' intelligence - a fact reiterated throughout the text. For example, Effie, 'the prize girl of Girton' (vol.3 p.72) is 'in some matters ... a veritable dunce and below the average of even stupid girls' (vol.3 p.72). The 'Girton Girls' have therefore become hybrid figures: parodies of manly appearance and behaviour, they lack both 'masculine' superiority of thought and 'feminine' grace. That the education received by the 'Girton Girls' is dangerous is never in doubt. That the 'Girton Girls', despite their college life, are both uneducated and unfeminine in contrast with the doomed old-fashioned 'ideal' woman is also explicitly stated by the narrator:

> If the cowl does not always make the monk, neither does mere education, *per se*, improve the quality of the individual. Effie with her ethnic curiosity, Laura with her

---

33 Lynn Linton, *The One Too Many*, London 1894, vol.1, pp.137-8. All further quotations are from this edition and will be referred to in the main text by volume and page number.

> pessimism and chronic despair, Carrie with her sex-hatred, Julia with her sex-adoration, and Moira Brabazon with her gentle efforts to adjust herself to her surroundings ... and wanting only to be left in peaceful ignorance of art, science, history, and poetry - which was the most lovable, the most admirably feminine?
> Scarcely the four 'pals' who smoked cigarettes, talked slang, and 'did their little swears' in Effie Chegwin's untidy diggings at 200 Hampden Gardens! (vol.2 pp.85)

These 'advanced' *fin-de-siècle* women are thus to be read as inferior to the 'ideal' of the past. Yet it is the very fact that although 'manly' in manners and aspirations they still cannot revoke their womanliness that makes them most dangerous: their womanliness has not been destroyed but, worse, warped. The contention that higher education unsexed woman yet, paradoxically, could not overcome innate 'femininity' was common in apocryphal warnings in medical periodicals. Any argument claiming that women became *fully* unsexed by following 'manly' paths implied that womanliness is not innate, and therefore that female to female difference is possible. In order to maintain the myth of a female lack of individuality/originality it was necessary to maintain that higher education perverted but could not fully overcome womanly qualities. The consequence of the physiological damage which has unsexed Linton's 'Girton Girls' is not, then, the destruction of their womanliness, warped though it is, but the literal destruction of Moira *because* of their warped 'femininity'. The narrative takes great delight in detailing the various ways in which each 'Girton Girl' has been unsexed and in each case their communal blame for motivating Moira's suicide derives from the particular nature of their individual warping.

Laura Prestbury has been the most obviously damaged, physically and mentally, by her college life and she is constructed in a mode conforming almost entirely to the dire projections in scientific writing. Laura has strained nerves, no appetite (worse - she is a vegetarian!), suffers from 'intellectual depression', (vol.1 p.130) is nicknamed 'Misery', and displays a tendency to suicide. The narrator explicitly points the reader to the physiological arguments against higher education for women:

> Her whole nature seemed to have been warped; and the physiologist would have understood why. Educated beyond her physical strength, her nerves had become diseased, her brain unhealthy, her blood vitiated. And the exaggerated cultivation of her intellect had stunted both instincts and natural affections till little or nothing was left of either. She was one of the many victims to the intellectual ambition of

> woman ... which ignores physical disabilities as well as all else that differentiates women from men, and makes the charm, the beauty, and the usefulness of the sex. (vol.1 pp.138-9)

The implication is clear. Laura, who evinces no interest in marriage or motherhood, has not only become mentally injured but has suffered a corresponding physical injury in the atrophying of her reproductive faculties. Whatever claims she makes to independence, she has no control over her body and its power to denote her diseased 'femininity'. She shudders at the thought of having children. When asked how the world is to survive she states: 'Why should it go on? ... [l]et men die out' (vol.1 p.154). Later in the text, the narrator intimates that it is Laura's 'premature initiation into the darker sores and secrets of life' (vol.3 p.127) which has robbed her of happiness. Clearly, excess of knowledge is a dangerous thing! With no marital future to look forward to, Laura's end is predicted by the narrator: suicide. It is her preaching of suicide as 'sometimes meritorious, and at all times allowable' (vol.3 p.133) which is in Moira's mind when she ends her life. That she would never have thought of this on her own is clear: earlier in the text we are told 'it never occurred to her to kill herself' (vol.1 p.186).

If Laura's unsexing in body and mind has led to her repulsion of men, then Julia Belcarro's possession of too much knowledge has created the inverse effect. Julia has left Girton, an entirely female environment, only to become obsessed with the opposite sex, always waiting for her 'prince charming'.[34] Yet, although Julia adores men, and always takes their part against women, she too is unsexed. Her desire for male companionship, attained in her liaison with Brabazon, is immoral but asexual. Julia, delighting in the attentions of a married man knowingly offers herself as his devoted companion. Ironically, Julia's offer to Brabazon is a perverted version of expected wifely behaviour, thus indicating her innate but warped womanhood. She will be his helpmeet: 'I would live for you, and you only, if I could be of use to you - if I could help to make you happy.' (vol.3 p.168) What should be a natural response to one's husband becomes an immoral proposal to an already married man.

Julia's warped nature has also left her with an absence of female intuitive power which might have enabled her to perceive Brabazon's intellectual pretensions for the egotistic nonsense they are. Far from enhancing her mental

---

34 It is ironic that Julia awaits her 'prince charming' given that the text aligns her with Brabazon who thinks himself fit for a princess and perceives himself as a majesty: see vol.1, p.55 and pp.133-4.

abilities, her Girton education has left her obsessed with men but devoid of sexual desire and, therefore, fit only to be the companion of Brabazon.[35] Julia defends her behaviour by employing the argument already referred to above: that women require a higher education to enable them to engage in companionable marriages. Several times Julia justifies her appropriation of Moira's husband by pointing to Moira's lack of intellectual ability and Brabazon's need for her as an intelligent companion: 'And such a dunce as she is, I dare say she is as glad to be rid of her husband's conversation - which she cannot understand - as he is refreshed by finding people who do appreciate him - like Laura and myself.' (vol.3 p.27) In fact it is made quite clear that Brabazon's belief in the superior nature of his intellect is comic (and dangerous). Julia literally sits at his feet, perceives him as sublime, and accepts instruction from him.[36] It is Julia's usurpation of Moira's place (she even moves into their home) and her 'intellectual' friendship with Brabazon which finally reinforces Moira's conviction that she is the 'one too many'.

The third 'Girton Girl', Carrie Mason, receives least attention in the text but she too is warped in mind and in aspiration. Laura and Julia have been physiologically damaged in mind and body. Carrie simply expresses a hatred of inferior men and her acquisition of 'manly' characteristics has made her uncouth and coarse: 'She was a pert, snub-nosed clever, audacious little girl, less like a B.A. than the kind of person one sees behind a bar when chaff prevails and the busy-handed young lady serving out the drinks gives as good as she gets.' (vol.1 p.128) Yet she too cannot escape an innate desire to be approved of by men: when Brabazon begins to court Julia and Laura, Carrie mocks their response but her mockery is accompanied by a 'little touch of jealousy' (vol.3 p.25). Carrie's 'crime' in relation to Moira is to deprive her of the one companion with whom she felt most at peace - her sister, Vanda. Once adoring her older sister, Vanda internalises the teaching of the 'Girton Girls', in particular Carrie, and now 'the child had become decidedly warped from her natural allegiance ... "Oh! you know nothing, Moira," she would say ... "... and these clever ladies know everything in the world!" ' (vol.3 p.61) The loss of Vanda's companionship is another motivating factor in Moira's suicide, again reinforcing her belief that she is the 'one too many'.

---

35 For a discussion of Brabazon's perversities see pp.61-5 below.

36 Julia thus inadvertently reveals her innate 'femininity'!

The narrative construction of the fourth 'Girton Girl', Effie Chegwin, is the most interesting: the text here develops an ambiguity that renders the warped nature of this 'Girton Girl' ambivalent. Laura, Julia and Carrie are constructed almost entirely negatively, and in such an exaggerated fashion that the narrative undermines its own credibility by its comic absurdity. However, Effie, the leader of the group, could so easily have been the 'ideal' heroine. Referred to several times as a girl of the *fin de siècle*, she is an interesting combination of both the anxieties and vicarious thrill embodied in the 'Girton Girl', and a parodic perversion of the 'ideal' woman. Effie has a busy time in the text. She engages in philanthropic pursuits, visiting the poor in the East End; she perceives the misery of Moira and offers help; she attempts to benefit P.C. Hartley's career and nurses him when he is injured; she denounces Julia and Laura's friendship with Brabazon; she chides Laura for her pessimism and Carrie for her man-hating; she moralises on the 'mashing' of married women; she espouses a radical philosophy; she uncovers an anarchist plot; and she rejects her class to align herself with Hartley romantically.

In each case, any element of her behaviour that could signify her as the womanly 'ideal' is displaced. Her philanthropy is motivated not by a moral or spiritual impulse (she is an atheist) but by curiosity and a desire for more knowledge: 'For in truth Effie Chegwin was neither tender nor sentimental.' (vol.1 p.160) Her offers of help to Moira (first, get a job in a shop rather than marry Brabazon; later, resist his tyranny) are based entirely on her own 'advanced' and unwomanly ideals and display a singular lack of understanding of the true nature of the psychological brutality of both Moira's mother and later her sadistic husband. Indeed, her interference with Brabazon on Moira's behalf has a negative effect:

> [He] abandoned her [Moira], and made her feel that he did ... He would not allow her to speak; he would not allow her to remain at home ... This was what Effie's well-meaning efforts to loosen her chain had brought her. It would have been better, all things considered, if she had been left undisturbed in her bondage. (vol.2 pp.192-3)

Her attempts to help Hartley's career lead to suspicion in the police force, proving 'the folly of women meddling in things they do not understand' (vol.2 p.78). Her uncovering of the anarchist plot and her part in the rescue of the wounded policemen serve merely to denote her 'insensitiveness and masculine courage' (vol.2 p.215) - although both prove useful! Her 'radical' act of 'betraying' her class by becoming engaged to Hartley is a desire to attain a dominant role through reversing the rightful relationship between men and women. While purporting to

desire marriage to a man she 'could respect and look up to, if not for birth or absolute amount of knowledge, yet for his brain-calibre, his ambition, his intellectual aspirations' (vol.1 pp.158-9), her real desire is to lead. She would 'develop his mind to the utmost limits of which it was capable ... [s]he would lead, educate, inform, and his perfected brain would be her work' (vol.2 p.252). Effie's narrative progression becomes a perverted and warped parody of the 'ideal' Victorian heroine's movement from spinsterhood to marriage. Although unable, even as a 'Girton Girl', to escape her womanly nature, her inappropriate education has trammelled her womanliness into dangerous channels:

> Her womanly instincts were all warped, granted; but they were there in their twisted and unsexed condition; and this feeling of personal sacrifice for the man she loved was as genuine and of the same quality as that of a man for the woman he protects against the world. It was she who protected James, not he her; and for this she glorified herself, and in this she found her comfort. (vol.3 p.242)

Yet despite the narrator's valiant attempts to inscribe Effie as a diseased product of the *fin de siècle*, the narrative simultaneously generates both sympathy and admiration for her. Effie's outrage at the manipulation and bullying of Moira may be accompanied by contempt for Moira's failure to revolt but the reader has already been positioned to share her outrage because of her knowledge of Brabazon. Effie's refusal to treat Brabazon as Moira's master causes Moira to suffer, yet both the narrator and the reader share her disdain for him. Brabazon's hatred of Effie is another point in her favour. Her 'strong-minded' decision to marry Hartley may be foolish but when juxtaposed with Moira's inability to act independently it at least shows courage, even if such courage is misplaced. While the narrator explicitly sets Moira and Effie up as two opposing forms of womanhood, with Moira the one to be revered, the narrative itself finds it hard to maintain its own condemnation of Effie. This ambiguity is exacerbated by the novel's portrayal of Brabazon.[37] Thus, while it is easy to understand the nature of the sins of the other three 'Girton Girls' against Moira, the blame ascribed to Effie is more nebulous, particularly given that Moira loves Effie.[38] Her love, however, is ironic. Effie, the 'advanced' woman, is depicted as (d)evolving from the ashes of the burnt-out 'ideal' woman: 'They [Moira and Effie] were ... the two symbols of the ideal

37 See pp.61-5 below.

38 Interestingly, Moira's defence of Effie to her husband at the close of the text is the first time she

womanhood cherished in the past but dying out in the present, and of the new creation rising strong and sturdy from the more delicate, more fragrant ashes.' (vol.1 p.207) Yet Effie's culpability, despite her unsexing, remains unconvincing.

All four 'Girton Girls' are presented as warped in body, mind and spirit, and this warping is detrimental to the genuinely 'ideal' woman of the text. Nonetheless, even these strong-minded 'Girton Girls', despite their 'masculine' appearance, behaviour or speech, cannot escape their innate 'femininity'. This is most evidenced in the failure of their friendship with each other, and their failure to befriend Moira. While it is their warped womanhood which characterises their crime against Moira it is their *innate* 'femininity' which precludes the formation of a female bonding system to save her from their own destructive influence. The 'Girton Girls' believe themselves to be 'pals', collegiate chums but their friendship is actually only superficial. There is no genuine bond between them and they are typically portrayed in competition with each other. By the close of the novel their purported intimacy has disintegrated. Laura and Carrie see Effie as betraying them, first by her decision that someone must inform Julia's family of her behaviour, and second in her forthcoming marriage to Hartley: ' "Effie? You?" she [Laura] said in tones of the deepest distress. "You, our leader, twice a traitor? - first talking of appealing to the home authorities to coerce one of us, and now saying that you are going to desert us, and marry?" ' (vol.3 p.238) Effie is shocked by this reaction and comments on what she believed was their bonding with each other: 'I should have thought our old friendship and long years of good comradeship together, would have made you more sympathetic towards me' (vol.3 pp.239-40). She should have known better. Earlier in the novel the narrator informs us that Carrie is 'pitiless to women who loved less wisely than too well' (vol.1 p.133).

While college for men may result in networks which serve to secure and maintain the transmission of male power, in this text college for women results only in superficial, competitive female 'friendships'. The one clear instance of bonding between the 'Girton Girls' comes when Brabazon refuses to invite Carrie to his garden party and Laura and Julia then decline his invitation. Yet this show of solidarity is insisted upon by Laura only because she is becoming 'bored and disillusioned' with Brabazon, 'disgusted with Julia' and decides 'their collective dignity' (vol.3 pp.112-3) requires a negative reply. Julia is made to agree. The lack of genuine female bonding in this decision is further exemplified by the fact that

---

contradicts his view and shortly precedes her suicide.

they blame not Brabazon but Moira for the discourtesy. The failure of the 'Girton Girls' to develop genuine friendships with each other, or to bond with other women, is ironically one of the main ways in which the text writes them *as* women.

The inability of women to be true to other women is a typical theme in Victorian writing. This inability is evidence, once more, of a female lack of originality. Women cannot have real emotional bonds with each other because they are too similar, they want difference:

> 'There is nothing fixed, no duration, no vitality, in the sentiments of women towards each other ...' ... And, after all, we need not go very far to find a reason why women are not good friends with women. They want diversity of character; and it is upon this diversity that the strongest friendships are built ... To bind people together, there must be different though corresponding angles in their characters ... *It is just this variety in which women are deficient ... they are too much alike ever to be great friends. Somehow, women do not differ from women as men differ from men.* Amidst all their innumerable diversities there is an underlying resemblance, something which resists analysis. [my italics] [39]

Despite their purported collegiate friendship, the 'Girton Girls' in *The One Too Many*, conform to this construction of womanhood. Indeed, by the end of the text Julia sees her relationship with Brabazon as replacing that with her former female 'friends': 'it was both her mission and her pride to become his friend - his close and intellectual friend, even as she and the other three had been "pals" ' (vol.3 p.267). Once Julia has acquired her prince charming she can summarily drop her former women 'friends': clearly, female to male bonding is seen by her as more valid. It is the quartette's treatment of Moira, however, which is most telling. The 'Girton Girls' can assert their own (false) superiority, claim (false) equality with 'manly' individuality by reasserting the inferiority of Moira. Thus Effie's well-intentioned advice to and apparent bonding with Moira is also an affirmation of her own purported difference to Moira, an affirmation of her superiority in the face of Moira's inferior status. Laura simply perceives Moira's views on marriage as ludicrous, while Julia blames her for failing to provide intellectual companionship for her husband. As a group: 'The Girton girls despised poor Moira for allowing herself to be married against her will; and to this was added their undisguised contempt for her mind and intellect in general.' (vol.3 p.179)

---

39 Anon., 'Women's Friendships', *Saturday Review*, 18, (6/8/1864), 176.

If Moira becomes, for the 'Girton Girls', the embodiment of inferior womanhood, then the 'Girton Girls' can assert their own difference, their own superiority, attained through their education. Ironically, their failure to bond with her merely reinforces their inability to escape their female nature. The suicide of Moira at the close of the text is thus apparently brought about by the failure of the women to offer her a means of sublimating her misery. On a symbolic level it simply represents the dying out of the old order and the replacement of it with the new. Yet this text, much more so than Edwardes's, continually finds itself working against its own polemic. While the 'Girton Girls' are clearly constructed as hideous perversions of womanhood as a direct consequence of their education, alternative narrative strategies undermine their culpability in the destruction of the 'ideal' woman.[40]

The 'Girton Girls' claim moral, social and intellectual independence from men and, apart from Julia, all refute the notion that men are nobler, superior or have more claim to individuality than women. Admittedly, each 'Girton Girl' proves herself unreasoned and warped. Nonetheless, the correlation between a Girton education and a disavowal of traditional notions of marriage is part of the narrative's critique of higher education for women. This proves unproblematic until considered in relation to the text's portrayal of Brabazon. The reader is clearly not meant to empathise with his views. He is presented as tyrannical and inflexible in his will. He submits to nobody and requires total obedience and acquiescence to his viewpoint and wishes. Although this aspect is never explicitly delineated but only hinted at, Brabazon, despite his tyrannical rule, is also written as the womanly man alongside the manly women, the 'Girton Girls'. This depiction is elusive. As a child Brabazon is never untidy, never dirty and pays great attention to his appearance. The narrator comments sarcastically: 'As a schoolboy he was a model ... He had inherited absolutely nothing from our arboreal ancestors, and the brute, like the savage, was eliminated from his constitution.' (vol.1 p.24)[41] As an adult he retains his concern over his dress and appearance and declines the advances of numerous potential wives until in his fifties he marries Moira.

It is Brabazon's relationship with Moira which turns the novel's polemic back on itself. Brabazon credits Moira with qualities she does not have.[42] For someone

---

40 The ambiguity and irony of Lynn Linton's anti-feminist polemic in this text and elsewhere is discussed in Nancy Fix Anderson's biography, *Woman Against Women in Victorian England: A Life of Eliza Lynn Linton*, Indianapolis 1987, pp. 96-8, 117-135, 196-216.

41 Ironically, his treatment of Moira is extremely brutal and savage.

42 Effie also accords Hartley with qualities he does not have. Parallels between Effie and Brabazon

who holds his own intellect in such high regard, his ability to read signs is discouragingly deficient. Moira 'a pure-minded and gentle-natured English girl who would make a good wife and a fond mother, but nothing more remarkable' (vol.1 pp.2-3), appears to Brabazon to 'understand things deeper than even his somewhat enigmatic words' (vol.1 p.29). In fact, 'she knew his meaning no more than if he had been talking Hebrew' (vol.1 p.29). Later, discovering her lack of intellect, he proposes to train her mind but attempts it in a way suited not to women but to men, bombarding her with facts and dialectical arguments.[43] The result? - 'Moira's intellect ... so far from being sharpened by this unceasing grinding, became more blunted and less active than before' (vol.2 p.160). His continual belittling of his wife, his brutal and sadistic mental manipulation of her inability to follow his 'logical' deductions about his role as master and hers as totally obedient wife,[44] his later complete rejection of her, certainly constitute mental cruelty. However, the narrative works on a more interesting level than this, for Brabazon lacks a healthy sexual response to Moira, reinforcing earlier intimations that he is the womanly man.

Although attracted by Moira's great beauty the potentially sexual element of this beauty is for Brabazon unclean and/or terrifying. After his proposal has been forcibly accepted, the narrator comments: 'Her lips ... of such perfect form and colour, awakened in him no impulse, caused no thrill of sense or longing. He would have blushed for himself if they had' (vol.1 p.95).[45] On their wedding day, driving to the station, a portentous thunderstorm has Moira 'throwing her arms round him ... trembling with terror' (vol.1 p.254). Brabazon's reaction is interesting. Embarrassed and offended that 'an embrace' (vol.1 p.254) has been initiated by a woman he repels her, '[b]ut stirred, *so far as possible for him to be stirred* ... he warmed so far as to imprint a stately kiss on her cheek ... exhorting her ... to eschew hysterics, which were not to his mind' (vol.1 p.255) [my italics]. The obvious connection between the womb and hysteria (which is not to his mind!) and the double meaning of stirred, again evoke a sense of a fear of desire. Later in the text, Moira's lips are

---

are one way in which the text attempts to counter sympathy for Effie.

43 The text indicates that this method of 'education' is inappropriate by the example of George Armstrong's treatment of Moira: 'The intelligence which had refused to blossom forth at the bidding of intelligence, broke into sudden bloom at the touch of sympathy' (vol.3 p.80). George would have made Moira the ideal husband.

44 See, for example, vol.1, pp.91-2.

45 Brabazon's proposal begins thus: 'He took her hand and almost forced her on to the seat ... "And you," to Moira, "keep quiet and hear what I have to say." ' (vol.1 p.65)

again referred to: 'Her lips he had never allowed himself to touch.' (vol.2 p.10) The combination of the absolute negative with the reflexive pronoun hints again at a forcibly suppressed desire. Only once does Brabazon permit himself to lose control with Moira. Passing his hand through her hair 'with almost a caressing gesture' (vol.2 p.10) he 'felt ashamed of his action, and had mentally taken himself to task' (vol.2 p.10).[46] In addition, on both occasions when Brabazon touches Moira's hand there is an intimation of physical intimidation. These intimations of a sexuality sublimated by violence are also evidenced when the reader is accorded knowledge of his inner thoughts. When Moira displeases him he takes enjoyment from imagining the punishments he will inflict on her. This perverse pleasure in imagining inflicting pain (even if not physical) and humiliation is not limited to Moira but extends to other women too.

Brabazon's sublimation of desire by imagined or implied violence is accompanied by a further displacement of the physical onto the mental arena as a surrogate space for violation. Thus while he does not physically beat Moira he mentally beats her. Moira's ever-present fear of retribution from him for failure to comply with a command is the typical reaction of someone cowed by physical violence. References with explicitly violent overtones are frequent: Brabazon is described as 'hammering' into her brain (vol.1 p.257), as a slave-driver cracking his whip (vol.3 p.255), and as the sultan, with Moira his slave (vol.1 p.55). In effect, Brabazon's mental/verbal beating of Moira is a form of mental/verbal rape: fear of desire is transmuted into domination and the sexual forcibly suppressed and displaced onto the mental. That Brabazon's distaste/fear of female sexuality and subsequent desire to dominate it is channelled into mental brutality is further suggested at the start of volume 3. Had he to earn a living, Brabazon's true vocation, we are informed, would be to teach 'a class of young ladies' (vol.3 p.1). His means of teaching would be to rule 'with a rigidity ... that nothing could weaken' (vol.3 p.1), to contradict whenever he wanted to, to stamp on any revolt, and to 'set his foot on originality' (vol.3 p.2). His reward? - 'he would have gained the love of these tender flowers' (vol.3 p.2).

Brabazon's fantasy life here and elsewhere in the text and his actual treatment of Moira reads much like a sado-masochistic pornographic wish-fulfilment with the slave-master's brutality not just negating the implied threat of the female but also rewarded by her love as a consequence of her desire to be dominated. In

46 The key word here is 'mentally': Brabazon's obsession with his intellectual prowess is an attempt to

addition to these rather obvious examples of sexual sadism transmuted into mental domination, the narrative makes only one explicit reference to Brabazon's sexual proclivities - and this serves only to confirm what has already been implied: 'Mr. Brabazon's erotic ambition never had gone further than the possession of the mind, the soul.' (vol.3 p.228) It is clear now why the unsexed 'Girton Girl', Julia, is a fit companion for Brabazon. His relationship with her continues the pattern of substituting the sexual for the mental. Julia can converse with him in Latin and German and engage in 'philosophical' debate. She reveres and idolises him. Brabazon now commits mental adultery (just as he commits mental rape). However, as the narrator comments, 'because in all this there was no surreptitious love making of a discreditable kind, Mr. Brabazon's marital conscience was clear and Julia's maidenly principles were not outraged' (vol.3 pp.271-2).

Given Brabazon's character, the most interesting level of ambiguity in the text's simultaneous denunciation of Brabazon and the 'Girton Girls' lies in the fact that the stance against male domination taken by Effie and Laura seems entirely justified when juxtaposed with the view we are given of the Brabazons' marriage. Ironically, as Effie notes, it is Moira's very qualities as the 'ideal' woman that preclude her from avoiding her miserable existence. Not only is she unable to withstand the pressure of her mother and Brabazon in forcing her to marry, but once married she retains the internalised lessons of the 'ideal' woman: that it is her duty to submit, to obey 'the master', to make the best of her marriage. In addition, it is her very simplicity of mind, the intuitive and experiential reasoning which denote her an 'ideal' woman, which preclude her from standing up to Brabazon's mental onslaughts. The fact that Effie, and ultimately Laura, perceive the true nature of Brabazon's character and despise it (even if Effie's interference makes matters worse and Laura's talk of suicide has dire results) does much to uphold their own view of the suppression of women by men. The narrative finds itself in the position of having to denigrate the warped nature of the independent thinking of these two 'Girton Girls' while their perspective of fe/male relations is amply justified when we see it realised in the brutal way in which Brabazon oppresses his wife. Thus, the narrator comments that Effie addresses Mrs Brabazon as Moira because she [Effie] has 'educated herself out of all respect for the purely feminine virtues so entirely as to look on patience and poltroonery, and submission to the inevitable ... as no better than the vileness of a slave' (vol.2 p.170). Yet the narrative itself explicitly writes the

---

sublimate the body.

Brabazon marriage in such terms. 'It was the Sultan and the slave - the captive invited to share the throne of the monarch' (vol.1 p.55), is Brabazon's thought when he proposes. Later in the text Moira has to carry out his orders for '[t]here stood the slave-driver, here cowered his slave; there cracked the whip, and here shrank the victim' (vol.3 p.255). Similarly, Laura drawls '[a]ll men are brutes but husbands are devils' (vol.2 p278), just after we have been given a narratorial insight into the brutal revenge he is plotting in his mind for the 'Girton Girls' and his wife: he will throw them out like toads or cockroaches; he will return Moira to her mother; he will leave her to suffer alone in *his* home; he will go to law; 'He would do - he knew not what. But he would do something terrible and *striking* to avenge the insulted majesty of husbands.' (vol.2 p.277) [my italics]

Thus, the text's positioning of Effie and Laura as warped, unsexed women demands that we condemn their advanced opinions on marriage at the same time as those opinions appear to be validated by the way in which the text itself writes the Brabazon marriage as an exaggerated form of that purported over and over again in Victorian discourse as the acceptable relationship between husband and wife.[47] The narrative cannot contain the conflict it has generated and attempts to side-step its polemical ambivalence in its closure. Moira's suicide is the last resort for the kind of woman once revered but now rendered extraneous by the advent of the advanced 'Girton Girl'. It enables her to play out to its logical conclusion a female role of helpmeet to others: 'the one sole sentiment sustained her - her death would be the gain of all those whom she now obstructed and confused' (vol.3 p.324). Her suicide serves as an apocryphal warning: in this text, while the diseased, warped and educated 'Girton Girl' is noisily (d)evolving, it is at the expense of the 'pure-minded and gentle-natured English girl' (vol.1 pp.2-3) who has quietly 'sank, as a dead thing might, without a struggle to her doom' (vol.3 p.325).

2.3 The 'Girton Girl' and Self-renunciation

Moira's literal self-sacrifice in Linton's *The One Too Many* is a grotesque perversion of the self-renunciation often called upon from a wife. Indeed, its very grotesqueness derives from the fact that self-renunciation and self-sacrifice were typically prescribed as appropriate female inclinations throughout the Victorian period. Repeatedly, the construction of woman in terms of self-abnegation was a

47 Overall the text does not give a good press to marriage or parenthood. Mrs Winter West (Moira's mother) so dominated her husband that he was 'glad to die' (vol.1 p.12), and Effie's parents are blamed for lack of parental guidance.

convenient means of writing her in terms of absence. That is, typically, it was suggested that women should renounce their own ambitions and perceive their identity in relation to service to others. This Victorian paradigm of female duty also wrote self-abnegation as a 'natural' female aspiration and was used as a means of attempting to control/suppress female individuality. Conveniently, it was all-encompassing: the function of the wife was to serve her husband and nurture her children; the function of the unmarried daughter was to help her mother and serve her fathers and brothers.[48] However, in the latter decades of the century the association of the unmarried daughter with self-sacrifice and self-abnegation became increasingly problematised.

The idea that women exist to serve others sat uneasily with the idea that they might be educated: permitting women to attain knowledge was seen, potentially, to encourage women to seek individuality and personal ambition at the expense of self-renunciation for the good of others. Hence, even some writers purporting to promote the improved education of girls/women continued to affirm that woman's true function was to serve others in the domestic sphere. Indeed, some went to extreme lengths to negate the implication that access to education meant the realisation of individual ambition at the expense of self-abnegation. In 1866, for example, Mrs Roe managed to absent girls'/women's needs entirely from her musings on their education. Women, she claims, need to be educated so that they can appreciate the work of those above them in 'mental stature', so that they can evince a 'never-failing willingness' to perceive their husband's superiority.[49] A woman's mission, according to Roe, 'is to live for others, not for herself alone'.[50] In short, '[t]he most perfect women are those who have gone through life in such a quiet course of well-doing as may have left no footprints on the sands of time'.[51] The most perfect women are clearly those who are silent, invisible, self-sacrificial to the degree that their personal identity is written out of existence.

Similarly, in 1872, Alexander Grant, writing on the beneficial effects of the higher education of women, also constructs his 'feminine' ideal in terms of self-renunciation:

---

48 The most well-known advice manual constructing a version of the self-abnegatory unmarried daughter is Sarah Stickney Ellis's *The Daughters Of England, Their Position in Society, Character, and Responsibilities*, London 1845.

49 Mrs Roe, *A Woman's Thoughts on the Education of Girls*, London 1866, pp.11, 24.

50 *ibid.*, p.38.

51 *ibid.*

> It is the ideal of a life and character; strong in its weakness, exalted in its lowliness; *powerful over others by its abnegation of self*; quick, and bright and penetrating, not by means of acquired learning, but through intuitive perceptions sharpened by the exigencies of life and made watchful by affection; full of grace ... and sympathy, and good counsel, it is the mainstay of families, and commands the worship of the world. [my italics][52]

He goes on to argue that higher education will offer individual women happiness while also highlighting their 'usefulness to their fellow-creatures'.[53] Individual ambition - that is, a desire to increase one's knowledge purely for self-fulfilment - was typically seen as inappropriate. The appropriate education of women, on the other hand, would teach them, paradoxically, that suitable female ambition means female self-abnegation in order to serve others. The idea that women should be educated in order to be useful to others continued in the 1880s. Lynn Linton's 1886 article against the higher education of women, quoted earlier, also asserts the need for women to be self-abnegating. However, importantly, Linton explicitly writes of female sacrifice as a corollary of the suppression of unsuitable female individuality. She makes a direct link between a development of female individuality (here, women's right to choices outside the domestic sphere, such as a university education,) and subsequent damage to the family:

> it is yet undeniably better that they [women] should be unnoted as individuals and perfect as mothers, rather than famous in their own persons and the mothers of abortive and unsatisfactory children. In this lies the soul of the controversy; for the whole question is contained in the relative importance of individual rights and social duties - freedom for self-development in such direction as may suit ourselves, or subordinating our personal desires to the general and unindividualized good.[54]

Linton goes on to claim that the current disorder she perceives in society is linked to claims for individual rights, and states, with no sense of irony, that

---

52 Alexander Grant, *Happiness and Utility as Promoted by the Higher Education of Women. An Address Delivered by Sir Alexander Grant, Bart., LL.D, Principal of the University of Edinburgh, in Opening the Sixth Session of the Edinburgh Ladies' Educational Association on the 5th November 1872*, Edinburgh 1872, p.9.

53 *ibid.*, pp.10-11.

54 Lynn Linton, 'The Higher Education of Woman', *op. cit.*, 506.

'[w]omen ought to be individual, not for themselves but for others'.[55] For Linton, it is woman's very tendency for inappropriate individualism which leads her to fail to perceive the wider society: 'The ordinary woman cannot be got to see that she is not only herself but also a member of society and part of an organization; and that she owes, as a duty to the community, the subordination of her individualism to that organization.'[56] Interestingly, she seems to be arguing that women, as opposed to men, are more inclined to individuality. However, when found in women individuality becomes a negative factor: female individuality is equalled with selfishness. Linton is, in fact, calling on girls to renounce personal desire for a higher education (a form of selfish individualism) because it will damage their reproductive capabilities and hence prevent them from discharging their duties to society: 'A girl is something more than an individual; she is the potential mother of a race; and the last is greater and more important than the first.'[57] Women, then, were to renounce personal ambition to fulfil their duty to society; which in reality meant they must locate themselves only in the domestic sphere and must forgo a higher education.

By the 1890s, constructions of the middle-class daughter as someone born to serve others were increasingly contested and revised. The opening of higher education to women played a part in this contestation and revision. In 1894 B.A. Crackenthorpe, writing in the *Nineteenth Century*, made a plea on behalf of the adult unmarried daughter and created what rapidly became a stereotype: the daughter in revolt.[58] It was swiftly taken up by other writers and a series of periodical articles on 'the revolt of the daughter' debated the rights and duties of the unmarried daughter, the iniquities or proprieties (depending on the writer's stance) of the marriage market, and the rights and wrongs of according unmarried daughters sexual knowledge. Significantly, an acceptance of the widespread changes in female education pervaded these articles. Further, the discussion over the unmarried daughter's rights and duties was repeatedly linked with individuality.

---

55 *ibid.*

56 *ibid.*, 507.

57 *ibid.*, 508.

58 David Rubinstein notes that the figure of the daughter in revolt was soon subsumed in the stereotype of the 'New Woman'. He also provides an overview of the periodical pieces on the daughter in revolt. See Rubinstein, *Before the Suffragettes: Women's Emancipation in the 1890s*, Brighton 1986, pp. 12-15. See also Beetham, *op.cit.*, pp.135-7. For a further discussion of the 'modern' unmarried daughter see chapter 5, pp.177-181 below.

Crackenthorpe's article bemoans the restrictions which preclude unmarried daughters from freedom of movement (to attend music halls, for example) and freedom of inquiry (to read certain books). She points out that since '[w]e have of late years elected to educate everybody, our daughters included' how can they now be blamed for insisting on 'the free use of the weapon [education] with which we ourselves have furnished them[?]'.[59] Noting that the days when fathers privileged their sons' education over their daughters' are, for the most part, over, she adds that 'the girl who sees herself confined to the single [profession] of marriage, is a really ill-used person'.[60] The most interesting feature of her article, however, is her uneasy acknowledgment that the liberation of the daughter from her narrow confines requires perceiving her 'right to be an individual as well as a daughter'.[61] Yet Crackenthorpe can only assert the daughter's right to individuality by introducing a satirical tone. In young adult daughters individuality is both 'the strongest - and the most inconvenient - thing about them'.[62] Wise mothers, she continues later, should not expend their energies 'in crushing every troublesome symptom of individuality' which appears in their daughters in revolt.[63]

The *Nineteenth Century* published three further pieces on the topic. M.E. Haweis's article comments that 'one of the oddest results of the "higher education" is a secret hostility to men as well as mothers in the young girl of to-day' and that the freedom called for by daughters in revolt is 'another word for individualism'.[64] She regrets that '[t]he word "dutiful" is obsolete'.[65] Kathleen Cuffe and Alys W. Pearsall Smith both wrote from the perspective of the unmarried daughter. Cuffe states that she writes not in the name of 'the highly educated, examination passing Girton girl, with her vast schemes for regenerating mankind' but 'in the name of the average ... damsel'.[66] She makes a special plea for the abolition of the chaperone system. Smith explicitly engages with the construction of the unmarried daughter as self-abnegatory, opposes the 'false ideal of self-sacrifice' and boldly asks for daughters to be allowed to be individuals:

---

59 B.A. [Blanche] Crackenthorpe, 'The Revolt of the Daughters', *Nineteenth Century*, 35, (1/1894), 25.

60 *ibid.*

61 *ibid.*, 26.

62 *ibid.*, 24.

63 *ibid.*, 28.

64 M.E. Haweis, 'The Revolt of the Daughters', *Nineteenth Century*, 35, (3/1894), 432.

65 *ibid.*, 434.

66 Kathleen Cuffe, 'A Reply from the Daughters', *Nineteenth Century*, 35, (3/1894), 438.

> In the past she has belonged to other people, now she demands to belong to herself. In the past other people have decided her duties for her, now she asks that she may decide them for herself. She asks simply and only for freedom to make out of her own life the highest that can be made, and to develop her own individuality as seems to her the wisest and the best. She claims only the ordinary human rights of a human being, and humbly begs that no one will hinder her.[67]

Gertrude Hemery, writing in the *Westminster Review*, was another proponent of female individuality. She states:

> I am only eighteen years old, and can boast of a latchkey, and am never chaperoned; and, speaking from my own experience, I think I may venture to assert that any young girl who takes the moulding of her life into her own hands, and asserts her right as an individual to the exercise of individual thought and action, will never have occasion to regret the step. She will attain an experience of the world that will strengthen her character, [and] bring out all her graver, nobler qualities.[68]

Adeline Sergeant's novel *No Ambition* (1895) was published a year after the periodical debate on the revolt of the daughters. It is a reworking of both earlier constructions of the self-abnegatory unmarried daughter, and of the 1894 debate on the right of the unmarried daughter to freedom and individuality. The central premise of the text is that woman's highest and most worthy ambition should be to do her duty to God. Conveniently, this duty is written in the text as requiring the renunciation of intellectual ambition in favour of the adoption of the domestic sphere. In order to prove this, the text compares the suffering but Godly path of its aspiring 'Girton Girl' (Valentine Denbigh) with the liberated, individualistic journeys of its selfish anti-heroines (Clarice and Katherine Denbigh): simply, the comparison

---

67 Alys W. Pearsall Smith, 'A Reply from the Daughters', *Nineteenth Century*, 35, (3/1894), 448, 450. Interestingly, Smith also refers to a friend's questioning of a group of girls among the first to attend college: 'Almost without exception each girl present said that she had had to fight for her liberty to go to college every inch of the way, and that all her family and friends had looked upon her as a monster of selfishness for persisting in carrying out her purpose.' (446)

68 Gertrude Hemery, 'The Revolt of the Daughters. An Answer - By One of Them', *Westminster Review*, 141, (6/1894), 680. She goes on to argue that knowledge, not ignorance, breeds moral responsibility. Similarly, Sarah M. Amos in 'The Evolution of the Daughters', *Contemporary Review*, 65, (4/1894), 519, argues that '[f]reedom brings responsibility, and responsibility breeds prudence'.

demonstrates the higher value of female self-renunciation over individual freedom. However, such a commonplace inscription of womanhood becomes interesting in view of the narrative strategies employed. Typically, vanquished 'Girton Girls' in fiction find themselves vilified or mocked for their unwomanly ambitions; they either come to learn that their proper role is as wife and mother or are examples of the dire consequences of permitting their inappropriate ambitions to be fulfilled. In this text, however, the aspiring 'Girton Girl' finds herself vilified by all around her for self-sacrificially giving up her intellectual ambition in order to carry out her self-imposed domestic duties. The main irony of the text, then, is that the primary daughter in revolt in this text rebels against her family not by demanding individual freedom but by embracing self-abnegation.

As in Edwardes's text, Girton itself is conspicuous by its absence. Valentine attains the distinction of coming top in the First Class Honours Division of the Girls' Examinations and is consequently awarded the coveted annual Girton scholarship. It is made clear throughout the text that Valentine wants to go to Girton. Moreover, at no point is it implied that attending college would damage her mentally, morally, or physiologically.[69] Indeed, the text makes no attempt to offer any explicit discussion of the suitability of college education for women. However, without denouncing female intellectual capability, the text undermines and negates the appropriateness of higher education for women while purporting to promote a positive version of the intellectual woman.

Valentine's achievement in winning the Girton scholarship clearly indicates her academic capabilities. However, unlike the rest of her family, Valentine also has a genuine understanding of the higher value of woman's role within the domestic sphere. Valentine knows from the start of the text what its two other daughters in revolt must come to learn: that appropriate female 'ambition' equals self-abnegation. Hence, the properly intellectual woman, the genuinely wise woman, becomes the woman who renounces the development of the intellect. In contrast to the two texts discussed above, *No Ambition* makes no attempt to write womanhood as intrinsically irrational; instead it writes out of the text the importance of female academic learning. The text manages to oppose higher education for women not by suggesting that women *could not* achieve academic success but by proving that a higher, Godly duty means they *should not* seek it.

---

69 It is implied, however, that an academic education has impaired her sister's and cousin's moral understanding.

The Denbigh family is 'a scholarly family' and it is taken for granted that the children - female as well as male - will gain academic distinction.[70] Clarice, Valentine's elder sister, is at Somerville on a scholarship; Kathleen, her cousin, is training to be a doctor; and Percy, her elder brother, is reading for Greats at Oxford. Mr Denbigh is himself 'a fine scholar and a man of extreme refinement' (p.21). The reaction from Valentine's teachers, classmates and family when she wins the Girton scholarship denote it a suitable and distinguished achievement. Valentine knows that for her family 'every atom of her success would have its full value, just as a failure would have been to them the most terrible thing in the world' (p.14). The key word here is value. The opening of the text sets up an apparent endorsement of the value of meritorious female academic success. Mr Denbigh's reaction on hearing of her success emphasises this: 'She had never given so much satisfaction to her father in her life - never heard him speak to her with so much proud affection and delight.' (p.25) The approval of the patriarchal head of the household seems to validate female learning as an acceptable and important source of worth in women, as well as in men. In the course of the narrative, however, this version of female value and worth is ruthlessly overthrown in favour of a definition of female value based on self-renunciation. In the Denbigh household the emphasis placed on academic achievement by women has disrupted appropriate gender hierarchies, with grave detriment to its members. The text, then, maintains its approval of the intellectually-minded woman only in the very process of rewriting her genuine worth in relation to the domestic. Ironically, Valentine's noble sacrifice on behalf of the domestic serves initially only to disrupt it further because the improper value systems upheld by her family deem it worthless and inappropriate.

Early on in the text there are clear intimations that while winning a Girton scholarship is laudable the worth placed upon it by her family signifies the family itself as dysfunctional. Ominously we learn that her father sets 'a value upon academical distinction such as he placed upon no other thing' (p.21), while her mother is pleased with the scholarship 'rather for her husband's sake than for Val's' (p.25). Moreover, Mr Denbigh is so convinced of the importance of academic study that he resents 'almost any claim upon him except those of his books' (p.23). His sole interest in his children is in their academic 'successes and distinctions' (p.75), while his wife is so 'entirely wrapped up in her husband' (p.23) she cares only 'for her husband's health' (p.75). This inappropriate parental example has had a

70 Adeline Sergeant, *No Ambition*, Edinburgh 1895, p.14. All further quotations are from this edition

detrimental effect on the three oldest children who are equally concerned only with their personal wants and needs. Kathleen, despite her medical training, fails to notice how ill Mr Denbigh is because she is too busy with her dissections and social life; Clarice refuses to think of unpleasant things; Percy laughs at Valentine's fears. It quickly becomes apparent through explicit narratorial comment that the value Mr Denbigh himself places on intellectual achievement in the family has led academic ambition to supersede all other ambitions. The result is a 'lack of harmony' (p.34) in the Denbigh household. Interestingly, the blame for this disharmony is put on the importance the family members place on the dominance of individuality over duty to others:

> It was a household of people with keen intellectual interests and deep devotion to their own mental development, but there was something wanting in it ... of which its members were only vaguely aware. Each person seemed to be fighting for his or her own hand, *trying to live a separate life of individual aims without any sense of solidarity* - certainly without any sense of kinship with the inhabitants of the world without their doors. (p.34) [my italics]

It is the aspiring 'Girton Girl' who is the exception and her difference is explicitly written in terms of a denial of self-importance: 'All the Denbighs were apt to rate themselves rather highly ... and Valentine, who had less of this belief in self than the others, was sometimes accused by them of lacking discrimination and proper self-respect.' (pp.34-5) Valentine's knowledge of the importance of setting aside personal ambition in order to follow a higher calling leads her to give up the Girton scholarship. One motive is cost: her father's ill-health requires that he and his wife journey abroad. Much more importantly, if Valentine, like Kathleen, Percy and Clarice, were to seek personal gratification by taking the scholarship, her younger sister would be left alone, with no one in charge of the domestic affairs of the house. Only Valentine perceives this: 'The need of somebody at home is greater than the need of money, mother. I don't see how I could go to College when father is so often ill, and you are so anxious, and Amy is alone so much.' (pp.70-1) The narrative writes this self-sacrifice in approving terms, specifically linking her decision to her faith: 'When she came out of church, she had an absolute certainty that she knew what to do.' (p.65) Significantly, the renunciation of the scholarship is a genuine sacrifice for Valentine 'cared very much indeed' (p.72) that she must

---

and will be referred to in the main text by page number.

forgo Girton 'but a higher duty called her to lay aside her own wishes and stay at home' (p.72).

From the moment Valentine announces her decision her sufferings begin. Ironically, having self-sacrificially given up her own ambition for the sake of the family, she is then ridiculed, treated with contempt and continually derided by them for her lack of ambition. Having fulfilled the traditional role of the daughter in revoking her individual identity in order to serve others, she finds herself continually signified by her family as worthless, a nonentity, a selfish, indolent, trivial woman, one 'absolutely devoid of any ... intelligent interest in the Universities' (p.87). Ironically, she is now seen by her family to be a daughter in revolt.

The novel puts much emphasis throughout on the continuing belittling of Valentine. This is clearly to be read as an ironic critique of a society which no longer accords proper worth to the domestic sphere. It must be reiterated, however, that Valentine is an intellectually capable woman who *wants* to go to Girton but who perceives that the individual benefits to be accrued from such a course would jeopardise the more important and wider needs of the family. The text does not write her as opting for a home life because of an innate proclivity to situate herself in the domestic. Thus the text finds itself adopting conflicting ideological stances. Valentine's sacrifice is always upheld as a rightful and Godly action, yet at the same time it is her very proclivity for study that denotes the extent of her sacrifice. That is, the text promotes the importance of female self-abnegation while apparently refusing to promote 'traditional' notions of the domesticated woman. This is most obvious in Geoffrey Seton's initial misreading of her character. He perceives Valentine's decision to stay at home as a sign that she is, like his mother and sister, a domestic, unintellectual woman. The narrator is quick to reject this: 'Valentine had no preference for a home life at all, in his sense of the word.' (p.89) Ironically, by writing Valentine's renunciation as self-sacrifice, the text finds itself forced to work against the idea that women are naturally aligned with the home: if this were so, there would be no genuine sacrifice involved in giving up Girton. The text attempts to deal with the contradictions it has itself generated in three main ways: first, by denoting the negative reaction to her sacrifice as the main source of Valentine's suffering; second, by partially reinscribing Valentine in relation to a world outside the domestic; and third, by inscribing Kathleen and Clarice as recalcitrant daughters in revolt who in the course of the text are taught that genuine female ambition requires female self-abnegation.

As already stated, the key significance in Valentine's sacrifice lies in the fact that despite having no preference for a home life, she has willingly embraced it because it will aid her family. Hence, the greatest burden she has to bear is the knowledge that her sacrifice is read by her family as an unnecessary revolt which creates disharmony in the household. The insistence with which the text delineates this is at times comic in its irony: her decision to stay at home evinces the reaction most aspiring 'Girton Girls' could expect to receive on announcing their ambition to attend college! Her father is outraged when she tells him she had better not go to Girton: '*Better* not! Better for whom? Better for your own indolence and want of ambition, no doubt.' (p.75) Her mother reacts to her sacrifice by announcing '[y]ou think yourself very important ... but I really think we could manage our affairs without your help' (p.75) and later, malevolently, continually interrupts her reading to demand she carry out domestic duties. Her brother is 'scandalised at the notion that any girl in her right senses could surrender a hard-won scholarship' (p.79). Her sister repeatedly tells anyone interested that Valentine has no ambition, then absolves herself of all domestic duties and 'with some complacency' (p.302) feels '[w]hat a comfort it is to have a sister who is always at liberty, and always willing to slave for other people' (p.302). Her cousin accuses her of becoming staid and conventional; Miss Helmont mocks her for sacrificing an 'intellectual career in order to keep house' (p.219). Again and again she is dismissed as having no ambition. As if this was not enough to bear, the man she loves and who loves her is promised to another, her father dies abroad, and her mother returns home only to collapse in a lingering illness where she remembers nothing except that Valentine offended her father by her lack of ambition!

So determined is the narrative to construct the culpability of the selfish Denbigh family as the cause of Valentine's noble suffering that the extent to which it inscribes her as forced to bear the indignity of being misunderstood begins to undermine its own credibility. From the moment the scholarship is given up, Valentine is perceived as worthless. Her individual identity, now linked with the domestic, is written out of existence, is defined as valueless by those around her. This is clearly a perversion of proper hierarchies of value. Yet Valentine herself, while never regretting her decision to forgo Girton, resents the way in which she is now defined by others:

> it was generally supposed that Valentine had no tastes, no ambitions, and was content with a life of drudgery and routine.

> No one knew how she rebelled against it in her heart! how she resented the imputation of laziness and inferiority, how she sickened at the prospect of the unchanging years before her! (p.220)

Given that the text is determined to construct Valentine's abnegation of self as a signifier of her comprehension of appropriate, Godly value systems, it finds itself forced to construct her suffering in silence: the genuinely Godly and dutiful woman should not boast of her spiritual understanding of the need for self-sacrifice. Thus, apart from a few early attempts to explain her higher calling, which are instantly dismissed, Valentine stoically and in proper renunciatory fashion, makes no attempt to defend herself. While this is clearly intended to denote her humility, instead it begins to denote her as masochistic: the more silent Valentine is about her genuine motivation, the more she is reviled and put upon by her family. Interestingly, the text also appears to begin to denote the domestic as mundane and debilitating: 'She had condemned herself to a dull, uninteresting life, (or so it seemed to her) from which there was no evident way of escape.' (p.142) Despite the qualifying 'or so it seemed', a self-sacrifice which condemns women only to the home, at the mercy of the wants and needs of others, is intimated to be a denial of potential.

The text most forcibly constructs Valentine's self-sacrificial tendencies as masochistic when she rejects Geoffrey. Having just learnt that her mother's lingering illness may last 20 years, Valentine is not receptive to Geoffrey's proposal of marriage. Despite his insistence that he will also take care of her younger sister and her mother, she refuses to be a burden on him. Geoffrey accuses her of self-inflicted martyrdom, and, indeed, the narrator appears to support this view, stating explicitly that if Valentine had let Geoffrey see her tears he would have insisted she 'do his will, and not her own' (p.209). This, says the narrator, would have been the best thing. Importantly, the point at which suitable self-sacrifice becomes unsuitable martyrdom is the point at which marriage would provide Valentine with an alternative domestic sphere. Giving up Girton was right, although unappreciated, because it was for a higher good. Giving up marriage is self-inflicted and unnecessary masochism, which, moreover, derives from her will prevailing over her future husband's. This further reinforces the text's denunciation of higher education: it is Godly to give up Girton but foolish to give up Geoffrey.

Interestingly, however, it is just this masochistic martyrdom which enables Valentine to resurrect herself as an, albeit acceptable, ambitious woman. That is, what appears as misguided masochism, ironically, enables her to find a means of

sublimating the boredom of domestic routine. Her narrative progression in the latter part of the text is not from one domestic sphere to another through marriage but from domestic boredom to self-fulfilment and public recognition through her writing.[71] By the end of the novel, inevitably now married, Valentine 'is considered one of the most promising young writers of the day' (p.316).

In order to offset the implication that her writing could denote a rejection of the domestic, it is towards the end of the text that the religious impulses behind Valentine's self-abnegation are most foregrounded. The text insistently bombards the reader with examples of Valentine's understanding of Godly morality with the implication that the suffering wrought by the renunciation of the scholarship has led her nearer to God. Just at the point where the text is about to resurrect Valentine as more than a domestically orientated woman she herself undercuts this by articulating the importance of renunciation: 'They are right: I have no ambition. For no success seems worth to me anything compared with love; and when I gave up my ambitions I renounced love too! Perhaps renunciation tends in the long-run to happiness' (p.248). The text can only begin to reward Valentine for her sacrifice by starting to relocate her in relation to her own ambitions (her writing) when she herself appears to accede to those who have defined her as having no ambition. Importantly, she here explicitly articulates a corollary between renunciation and happiness: it is in this final part of the text that the consequences of her renunciation and the earlier failure of Kathleen and Clarice to perceive the importance of self-abnegation become caught up with the competing ideologies of home versus career.

The construction of Clarice and Kathleen Denbigh is clearly intended to foreground the appropriate nature of Valentine's self-abnegation. To a modern reader, both characters are far more entertaining than Valentine. Both are negative versions of the daughter in revolt. Clarice is written from the start as a selfish, indolent woman: just the traits falsely ascribed to Valentine by her family. Although she has a Somerville scholarship and is derisive of Valentine's decision to stay at home, she has no real inclination for an academic education. Whereas Valentine is despised for giving up Girton to look after the home, Clarice perceives no irony in her own desire to forgo Somerville to marry a man who has already finished his degree and who 'does not approve of the higher education for women' (p.106). In

71 It is important to note, however, that Valentine's writing is published anonymously until it has received the endorsement of Geoffrey.

fact, Clarice is not happy either within the domestic or the academic sphere: 'she shrank from the limitations of her home ... [and] the exertions required by College life. It began to appear a superfluous waste of time that she should go up for 'Mods' ... Examinations were after all a little garish and vulgar, she said to Valentine' (p.140). She despises Valentine not because she has given up Girton but because she has given up Girton for a home life characterised by service to others. Giving up college in favour of an active social life seems entirely appropriate to Clarice who is quite happy to contemplate giving up her own academic career when it is for her own individual good. Whereas Kathleen perceives the selfless nature of Valentine's domestic role but does not contemplate it for herself, Clarice is not even aware that Valentine's decision has caused her suffering. She refuses to take any responsibility for the domestic care, first of her parental home and then her own. Having married for money not love, when her husband's career fails and he falls ill she neglects both him and her children to begin a book on Greek metres. It is Valentine who admonishes her for failing in her womanly duty: 'Would it not be better to put your intellectual life away for a time and devote yourself to making your husband and children happy?' (p.244) Clarice's rejoinder is familiar - with no ambition how can Valentine understand hers?

Clarice's conversion to acceptable womanhood, which conveniently endorses Valentine's understanding of it, is unconvincing. Nonchalantly bidding her husband farewell as he leaves her and the children to go abroad to seek work, she leaves her children in her sister's care and disappears to write her book - that is, she selfishly continues to pursue her own ambitions and claim her own individual freedom. For this she is punished. When her husband finally makes it back to England after a prolonged absence during which she has heard nothing and suffered much, we are told that Clarice has had a sudden conversion to appropriate womanhood. Now 'she would willingly toil with her hands for house and home, for husband and for children, rather than bear again those months of desolation and loneliness' (p.316). The conversion of Clarice into the type of self-abnegating woman her sister has always been is clearly meant to validate Valentine's stance and Clarice is summarily dropped from the text once she has performed this function.

Kathleen has a similar role. However, her conversion is rendered more complex. Kathleen is written from the start as strong-minded and conforms more

precisely to the daughter in revolt described in the 1894 periodical articles. She has rejected the academic path chosen by Mr Denbigh and his children by studying physical science and is training to be a doctor. Despite Mr Denbigh's disapproval (not because he is opposed to women doctors but because he wants her to take classics) she 'heeded his opinions very little ... [s]he was of a daring, almost an audacious nature: she loved novelty and adventure ... [s]he was attracted by everything that was new, whether in science, art, or philosophy' (p.33). In a text published in 1895 the use of the word 'new' is a clear warning sign to the reader, and Kathleen fulfils our expectations. Once Mr and Mrs Denbigh are abroad, Kathleen starts coming home at late hours, bringing young men with her, and is seen smoking in the street. Admonished by Valentine, she retorts: 'I only want to live a full, free, individual life. What do a few little conventionalities matter?' (p.161) In an extract quoted earlier, individualism was cited as the root of the lack of harmony in the family. It is once again used here to denote the danger of women behaving in accordance with their personal ambitions. Individuality in the text indicates selfishness and/or impropriety. The risqué set to which Kathleen attaches herself includes Adrian Helmont, an atheist, who 'does not profess conventional rules of life - he holds that each of us should follow out his or her individuality ... he despises narrowness and bigotry' (p.225). Again, the dangerous nature of such views is indicated by the word 'individuality'. The revelation that Helmont is, unbeknown to Kathleen, a married man, confirms this.

Kathleen is free-thinking, has a career not a chaperone, and lives in her own flat: she is the modern daughter in revolt. Yet she finds herself educated by the cousin she has despised as staid and conventional. It is Valentine who discovers Helmont's marriage; tells Kathleen; saves her from suicide; regains the letters Helmont is trying to blackmail her with; and teaches Kathleen that 'we bear it [suffering] with Christ our Lord' (p.289). Ironically, Valentine's discovery of the marriage is a direct result of her movement out of the domestic into the public sphere where she has begun to fulfil her own ambitions.[72] An important endorsement of the rightness of Valentine's earlier decision to forgo her ambition to go to Girton now comes from Kathleen when she asks Valentine to teach her 'to help others - as you helped me last night' (p.289). The liberated daughter in revolt

72 Valentine attends court to do research for an article she is writing and hears the case of Madame Helmont against her husband.

finds herself taught by the woman who has renounced Girton for a home life and it is clear that the text constructs Kathleen only in order to create a comparison between a higher educated woman and one who has renounced education for the domestic. Having fulfilled her purpose in driving this lesson home, as with Clarice, we hear no more of Kathleen other than that she is to marry Percy - and, presumably, to give up her career as a doctor. Nonetheless, the fact that Kathleen endorses Valentine's self-renunciation just at the point where Valentine is being reinscribed in relation to the public sphere, retains the ambivalence around the text's construction of the link between the domestic and womanhood.

The treatment of Kathleen and Clarice in the text is an all too obvious means of denigrating both higher education for women and the daughter in revolt. Their punishment/downfall posits a very simple moral: genuine happiness for women is found when they place the greatest value on self-renunciation. However, as already suggested, the text confuses its own ideological position, for the 'fall' of Clarice and Kathleen as ambitious women is paralleled by the resurrection of Valentine. Despite Kathleen's medical ambitions and Clarice's determination to write an academic study, it is Valentine, not the formerly recalcitrant daughters in revolt, who succeeds in a sphere outside the domestic. The close of the text displaces the confusion. Throughout the novel, her family has seen Valentine as having no ambition. However, in the very failure of others to perceive the genuine value of her Godly ambition, the text has managed throughout to inscribe her as following the proper, dutiful female path.

By the close of the text, Valentine's lack of ambition for worldly gains has been forcefully proclaimed as valid: Geoffrey is impressed when he sees 'what you have proved yourself to be, the mainstay of your home, the guide and comforter of your friends, a wise, noble woman in every relation of life' (p.312). The truly intellectual woman who forgoes Girton is here denoted 'wise' in relation to her domestic accomplishments. By the close of the novel Valentine has a husband to endorse her own understanding of female ambition: 'Where have our old aspirations and ambitions gone?' (p.318) she asks Percy. Her husband answers her question: 'Higher ... [f]or they have not been set upon things of the earth, but on things above the earth. Ambition is not a sin, dear. It may be a strength and virtue' (pp.318-9). It may be a strength and virtue but in this text it is only so in women when it is written as self-abnegation. Now Valentine can admit: 'I could not honestly say I had *no ambition*. Only it is not for myself - and it is not for the things of this world - ' (p.318). The 'higher' education of women is ultimately defined as teaching

women to follow the higher calling of God which requires renouncing Girton. The text, having resurrected Valentine as a woman linked to the non-domestic, closes by having Valentine herself write her individuality out of existence. This once-aspiring 'Girton Girl' understands the proper correlation between female 'ambition' and female self-abnegation.

2.4 Summary

The 'Girton Girl' texts in this chapter all attempt to retain a 'traditional' view of woman which sees her place in relation to marriage and the domestic. *A Girton Girl* tries to make the idea of a Girton education banal by demonstrating woman's innate proclivity for marriage; *The One Too Many* is more concerned to prove the debilitating and dangerous effects of the higher education of women; *No Ambition* attempts to negate the arguments about the 1890s daughter in revolt by reaffirming the older stereotype of the self-abnegatory daughter. In each text, the negative construction of Girton and the 'Girton Girl' writes higher education for women as an imprudent - and impudent - assertion of female individuality and autonomy; that is, female to female difference. Hence, each text also emphasises the ultimate commonality of its women characters. A similar construction of female to female similarity is evident in the negative constructions of the 'Lady Doctor' considered in chapter 3.

Chapter 3

Degrees of Opposition: The 'Lady Doctor' Vanquished

3.1 Ethics, Economics and the 'Lady Doctor'

> What responsibility, then, rests upon the physician! How careful should he be in the expression of his opinions! At what high ends should he aim in his daily example! How important that he should be right upon the great moral questions which agitate the community, and that his morality should be strictly that of the Bible![1]

The debate over the efficaciousness of women's entrance into the medical profession, similar to the more general debate over the appropriate education of girls and women, occurred within a context where concerns about the medical training of men and the role and function of the doctor were already occasioning a reformation of medical colleges and a redefinition of the professional status of the physician. Accompanying and contributing to this process of change, medical discourse increasingly insisted on the vocational nature of the profession. The 'ideal' doctor, it was asserted, did not randomly choose a medical career but was chosen for it; was called on by God to minister to society directly through the cure of bodily ailments and indirectly through giving spiritual succour. Therefore, many doctors, including Dr William Hooker quoted above, upheld the view that the doctor had a special moral responsibility to society.[2] A typical notion was of the doctor as the priest of the body. Given such affirmations of the doctor's important status it is not surprising that an individual's character and morality and his/her motives for entering the profession became of import, theoretically, at least; it is also unsurprising that medical journals and treatises attempted to outline both appropriate ethical behaviour and the appropriate qualities required in the 'ideal' physician.[3]

A doctor's character, ethics and morality, of import independent of the debate over medical women, became a particular focus of contention in relation to female practitioners. Both those advocating the need for women physicians and those vehemently opposed to them acknowledged that doctors were required to

---

1 Worthington Hooker, *Physician and Patient; or a Practical View of the Mutual Duties, Relations and Interests of the Medical Profession and the Community*, New York 1849, p. 391.

2 For a further discussion of this moral function see chapter 4, pp.141-5, 152-5 below.

3 Treatises on medical ethics were published prior to the Victorian period but the reformation of medicine and its professionalisation resulted in a plethora of new and previously published treatises.

possess particular traits of character. When considering female doctors, typically, 'innate' female traits were written as either proof of woman's fitness for a medical career or as denotations of her propensity for failure. Thus, while the general debate over the education of women attempted to define the appropriate education of women and the qualities which should be *imbued* as a consequence of it, the debate over medical women attempted to define the gender specific qualities which either *advantaged* or *precluded* a woman from practising medicine.

A typical strategy of the reformers was to appropriate those attributes most commonly assigned to women in mainstream ideology, and to proceed to name them the very qualities required in an 'ideal' doctor. An early plea for 'Lady Doctors' in the *Victoria Magazine*, for example, asserts that women's 'energy in all subjects which interest them, their patience and gentleness in assisting the sick, and their general readiness to take part in all good works' are fitting qualifications for their entrance into the medical profession.[4] Later, in the 1880s, Dr Mary Scharlieb listed her seven lamps of medicine: obedience, thoroughness, truth, courage, gentleness, humility and sacrifice.[5] Blackwell went so far as to assert that '[t]he true physician must possess the essential qualities of maternity'.[6] Woman's 'innate' proclivity for ministering to others with tenderness and compassion was thus transformed by some reformers from a state signifying traditional 'feminine' weakness into a state signifying a womanly ability to perform medical duties successfully in the public sphere.

Alternatively, those opposed to woman's infiltration of the medical profession named similar qualities admirably 'feminine' and therefore a hindrance to a successful medical career. Woman's purported gentleness and compassion were written as denoting her lack of stamina and physical strength. One writer on obstetrics, for example, claims:

> if we reflect that at all hours of the day and of the night, at all seasons of the year, and in all kinds of weather, the medical man, in health or in sickness, is liable to be called upon ... we shall hesitate long before resigning to weak and

4 Anon., 'Lady Doctors', *Victoria Magazine*, 3, (6/1864), 126.

5 Mary Scharlieb, *Seven Lamps of Medicine: Inaugural Address Delivered at the London School of Medicine for Women, October 1st 1887*, Oxford 1888. Scharlieb 'borrowed' three of her lamps of medicine from Ruskin's *Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849): truth, sacrifice and obedience.

6 Blackwell, *The Influence of Women in the Profession of Medicine. Address Given at the Opening of the Winter Session of the London School of Medicine for Women*, London 1889, p.11.

> tender women the most anxious, dangerous, and laborious departments of medical practice.[7]

It was not only woman's purported physical inferiority which was given as evidence of her unsuitability for a medical career. Her 'innate' nervous/mental instability was also asserted to preclude rational and objective diagnoses.[8] For example, a letter to *The Lancet* claims that:

> No woman, in any dangerous crisis calling for calm nerve and prompt action, would trust herself in the hands of a woman.
> Physically, women are not fitted to be doctors, for this very coolness and strength of nerve are wanting, or, from the constitutional variations of the female system, at the best are uncertain and not to be relied upon. [9]

Despite these different interpretations of 'feminine' traits, there was one point on which those on both sides of the debate were in accord: it was maintained that medical work must be undertaken in a spirit of service to both society and to God. An emphasis on service is typical of most medical discourse of the period, whether or not it is concerned with women practitioners. Typically, noble motives and high ideals were assigned to members of the profession, while a desire to train as a doctor for financial reward was often written as unethical for it did not correlate with the idea that medicine was vocational. Blackwell, for example, states: 'anyone who makes pecuniary gain the chief motive for entering upon a medical career is an unworthy student'.[10] However, in reality, attempts to further the professionalisation of medicine, through an emphasis on ethics, vocation and the moral character of the doctor, were problematised by the conflicting interests of economic necessity and market competition: despite the high ideals economic considerations did indeed influence a wo/man's choice of career.

The problematical nature of this conflict between ideals and economics was particularly exposed, sometimes inadvertently, when the issue of medical women came into consideration. Calls for the general higher education of women demanded that women be educated to afford them better opportunities for employment. Yet the woman undergraduate was not *a priori* inscribed in relation to a career. Moreover, however inaccurate, the common perception of the university-

---

7 Anon., 'London School of Medicine for Women', *The Lancet*, 2, (17/10/1874), 561-2.

8 For a fuller discussion of the innate mental and physical ill-health of women see pp.99-102 below.

9 'Mater', 'A Lady on Lady Doctors', [Letter to the Editor], *The Lancet*, 1, (7/5/1870), 680.

10 Blackwell, *op.cit.*, p.3.

educated woman linked her to a female sphere - girls' schools. Underlying the debate over medical women, however, there was an awareness that medical work would place women in direct economic competition with men. Indeed, early demands that medicine be opened to women were linked to the need to provide middle-class women with professional work. Thus, the attempt to denote woman as unsuited to practise medicine by virtue of her gender-specific traits was often a thinly veiled attempt to protect an arena of economic importance to the male.

Early women doctors ministered only to other women. Given that women patients typically provided the bulk of a male doctor's practice, it was clearly to the latter's advantage to denounce womanliness itself as the bar to the practice of medicine by women. Dr Walter Rivington, for example, veiled his fear of the economic threat women doctors might pose to men with a confident assertion that the 'experiment' should be tried, for it was bound to fail; that is, woman's unfitness for medicine would ensure that proper market forces prevail. He writes: 'we feel convinced that the movement must always be of a limited character. Women's disabilities are too many to allow more than a few to adopt the medical profession as a livelihood'.[11] Some were more honest in voicing their fears and pointed explicitly to their need to be protected from competition. A doctor writing to the *Alexandra Magazine*, for example, states:

> The bare fact that I am now liable to have a feminine practitioner competing with me in my struggle for a living, is quite as much of the case as I can look at for the time ... I only feel as a man whose field of labour, already over crowded, is being threatened with further encroachment.[12]

The issue is confronted openly by this writer with no attempt to justify his stance by illustrating female inadequacy: 'If I disrespected their abilities ... I should feel less uneasiness concerning their attempt to enter the profession to which I belong.'[13] The issue of women doctors thus brought to the forefront some of the conflicts inherent in the professionalisation of medicine. While an emphasis on ethics and morality increasingly denoted medicine a respectable career, medicine

---

11 Walter Rivington, *The Medical Profession: Being the Essay to which was Awarded the First Carmichael Prize of £200 by the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons, Ireland*, Dublin 1879, p.137.

12 'General Practitioner', 'Open Correspondence', *Alexandra Magazine*, 1, (4/1864), 62.

13 *ibid.*

simultaneously became a potentially lucrative and thus competitive profession. The latter rested uneasily with the former.

Anne Elliot's novel *Dr Edith Romney* (1883) reworks the contradicting and competing moral, ethical and economic ideologies transcribed in the discursive construction of women doctors. A deconstruction and apparent critique of the unideal motives, characters and ethics of the text's two male doctors are juxtaposed with a positive delineation of the honourable and womanly motives of the 'Lady Doctor' whose medical career they destroy. The depths of misogyny and prejudice experienced by female practitioners are sympathetically exposed by the text in its portrayal of Dr Edith Romney's inexorable and harrowing downfall. However, this apparent critique of male motives and ethics is accompanied by narrative strategies which denote inescapable and 'innate' female qualities as the primary factor justifying male opposition to Romney's medical career. While the superior motives of the woman doctor are evidence of her 'feminine' nature they simultaneously render her unfit to be a doctor.

The text thus transmits a contradictory and uneasy version of the 'Lady Doctor'. It initially inscribes Dr Edith in positive terms as both a lady and a competent and ethical medical practitioner. It then proceeds to overwrite its own positive version of medical women through revealing that the 'real' (as opposed to the 'ideal') key to a successful medical career lies in an ability to understand and manipulate the competitive nature of economics within the public sphere. Dr Edith's career is ostensibly destroyed by unethical behaviour on the part of the male doctors; by Dr Austin Fane's manipulation of his 'masculine' qualities; and by her bodily collapse which signifies her 'feminine' nature. Taken together, however, all of these serve to denote Edith's inability to manipulate to her advantage the market forces of supply and demand which require her to be capable of engaging in competition, individual to individual. Consequently, the contrasts made between Romney's motives, character and ethics and those of Fane and Fullagher work to inscribe her positively as a lady whose gendered difference from the male doctors signifies her lack of individuality; and thus her inability to endure within a capitalist economic system based on the survival only of the 'fittest'.[14] The apparently positive construction of the 'Lady Doctor' is thus transposed into a warning against the

14 There is an interesting play on 'fitness' in the text. In a Darwinian sense the strongest doctor is clearly Fane but Edith's noble motives make her more 'fitting' for a medical career.

dangerous consequences - for women and men - of the negation of a male economic monopoly.

The contrast in the perception of their profession between, on the one hand, Dr Fane and Dr Fullagher and, on the other hand, Dr Edith is marked. Romney has become a doctor to fulfil a noble desire to be of service to others and has no thought of competing with male prowess: 'Edith had not adopted the profession through any unbecoming desire to distinguish herself; the wish to be a doctor had grown up with her from childhood ... she wanted to give, not to receive; she wanted to do, to help, to make happy, to benefit.'[15] Concomitant with her philanthropic ideals, she wishes to concentrate her work amongst the poor and is disappointed at their rejection of her: 'They scorned the possibility of her possessing the very knowledge and skill which qualified her for doing this.' (vol.2 p.146) Yet Edith's 'feminine' desire to help others through medical work is clearly also a displacement of the gender hierarchies which maintain appropriate gendered difference. She wants 'to give, not to receive', to be independent rather than dependent: 'I chose to be a doctor because I wanted real, true and useful work to do, and because a doctor's life seemed to me to be one of the noblest and most useful, and, for me, the most suitable.' (vol.2 p.39) Edith will learn that choices are a male prerogative; that useful work by women should be restricted to the private sphere; and that medical work is *not* the most suitable for a woman precisely because *as a woman* she cannot negotiate a successful path between the contradictory demands of ideals and economics.

In simplistic and direct contrast to Edith, the two male doctors have little patience with the poor and have ignoble motives for entering the medical profession. Dr Fullagher states cynically: 'I began with the poor, but I let 'em drop as soon as I could. I loathe poor people ... "Low, vile, abominable wretches," as a fellow-student ... used to call them.' (vol.1 p.14) Forced to retire when his patients desert him for Romney, Fullagher requires revenge on her explicitly because of a self-confessed misogyny: 'I, who hate women and despise them - I, to be beaten in my old age by one' (vol.1 p.18). Fullagher persuades his younger friend, Dr Fane, to set up a practice in the town specifically to compete with Romney, destroy her practice, and reclaim a sphere of economic importance for the male. Fane has already been tempted by Fullagher's assurances of monetary gain and personal

15 Anne Elliot, *Dr Edith Romney*, London 1883, vol.1, pp.37, 43. All further quotations are from this edition and will be referred to in the main text by volume and page number.

glorification: 'You will win them, their money, their respect, their admiration' (vol.1 p.11). He finally succumbs on learning of the sex of the opposition:

> 'I don't know what women are coming to,' Fane said in a tone of strong disgust. 'They are recklessly throwing aside everything that most charms and attracts men ... A new man would find it easy to drive her out of the town.' (vol.1 pp.17,18)

The 'Lady Doctor' generates disgust in Fane and Fullagher because she is external to their preferred definitions of womanliness which, conveniently, bolster their own psychological, economic and social needs. They attain a sense of security, superiority, individuality and, hence, identity from the appellation doctor. The ascension of a woman physician threatens their male definitions of both gender and medicine and thus requires action; requires the ejection of the undesirable 'other' from their formerly protected sphere. To begin with, in his deliberate machinations to 'drive her out of the town', Fane's two most effective measures are advantageous manipulation of his 'masculine' personality and *ad hoc* adherence to medical ethics.

According to Dr Charles West, an influential nineteenth-century writer on matters pertaining to medicine, a physician's worth should be judged not just on the grounds of his scientific expertise but also on his ability to deal with his patients with courtesy and good manners. A physician, he writes, should treat patients 'as a friend ... be cheerful, be hopeful, sympathising'.[16] Yet such treatment of patients was also perceived to be a potential source of corruption if used in a manipulative fashion to attain ascendancy over other members of the profession. Again, the need to compete with colleagues came into conflict with ideals:

> We fear that many of the most successful of general practitioners owe their position simply to their proficiency in the art of pleasing. 'I never contradict a patient,' one of the most astute of our friends used to remark ... Many general practitioners seek to dazzle their patients by a dashing turn-out, an affectation of hurry and bustle ... As a rule, in general practice the patient is never told he has nothing the matter with him.[17]

---

16 Charles West, *The Profession of Medicine, Its Study and Practice; Its Duties and Rewards*, London 1896, p.16. See also p.20.

17 Anon., 'The Profession of Medicine', *Saturday Review*, 67, (25/5/1889), 633.

Dr Fane is presented in similar terms to the doctors in the above quotation. He is adept at using his personal charm to persuade his potential patients of the advantages of being attended by him. His unmarried status ensures he is well received by parents looking to make a good match for their daughters. The insights of Fullagher, who details the idiosyncrasies of the town's inhabitants, ensure that he knows the appropriate manner to employ with individual patients. On his arrival it is his appearance and his personal charm, not his medical skill, which are of interest: 'He is very dark and very handsome - and he is bronzed ... [w]hat struck me chiefly was his manner, it is so easy and careless and frank' (vol. 1 p.106). His medical skill, unlike Romney's, is taken as given: he is a man. Fane is content to permit his medical reputation to rest upon the superficial attractions of his physical appearance and his personality. In social situations he maintains an eye on the potential advancement of his career. He feels no obligation to be honest with patients if it will lose him their patronage. Edith cannot appease the bored hypochondriac, Mrs Harvey, for example, whose sole sense of enjoyment is derived from a doctor's attentions. Dr Romney prescribes truthfully:

> The chief event of her monotonous, self-indulgent life was her doctor's call ... Edith had taken her case very seriously and conscientiously ... had earnestly insisted on reform in diet and exercise ... Instead of listening with tender commiseration ... and suggesting some fresh delicacy which might be supposed to tempt a capricious diet, she had more than once exclaimed in honest dismay, and had ruthlessly forbidden ... half the dishes. (vol.1 pp.194-5)

Such an attitude, although strictly ethical, does not make economic sense. Fane, well-versed in the art of agreeing with a patient and armed with advice from Fullagher, treats Mrs Harvey in a manner that is 'grave, deferential, sympathetic' (vol.1 p.195). He makes a diagnosis that accords with her desires: 'He solved the vexed problem of exercise by suggesting a stroll in the garden on fine days ... leaning on her maid's arm; this pomp of invalidism he shrewdly imagined would take her fancy.' (vol.1 pp.196) He proceeds to seal her approval with 'a skilful hint to the effect that her sufferings were nervous [which put] the finishing touch to the good impression he made' (vol.1 p.196).

A doctor's use of such personal charm as Fane evinces was not in itself considered inappropriate - as is apparent in West's concern over the necessary politeness and care to be taken with patients. However, discriminating use of personality by a doctor was expected to be in accordance with the accepted codes of ethical conduct. Those physicians, including women, who addressed this issue

during the period were generally in accord in their delineation of the expected relationship between doctor and patient and between doctor and doctor. West states categorically: 'Every practitioner is bound to abstain from criticizing the treatment adopted by another'.[18] Garrett Anderson is equally clear that if a patient has called in another consultant there must be 'no trace of disloyalty in ... [his] words or looks as regards his colleague's treatment'.[19] Thomas Percival, an earlier writer still influential later in the century, states in his *Medical Ethics* that a doctor called to a patient normally under the care of another physician must propose a consultation even 'though he may have discontinued his visits'.[20] Moreover, when such a consultation could not be arranged due to exceptional circumstances, the new doctor should note the following:

> In medical practice it is not an unfrequent [sic] occurrence, that a physician is hastily summoned, through the anxiety of the family ... to visit a patient who is under the regular direction of another physician, to whom notice of this call has not been given. Under such circumstances, no change in the treatment of the sick person should be made, till a previous consultation with the stated physician has taken place.[21]

Percival's medical ethics were conceived of before the notion of a woman doctor was seriously considered. Yet even West, who was consistently anti-women, acknowledged that female doctors were entitled to the same ethical considerations. He writes that they are to be consulted or may call in a male practitioner in consultation and 'in either capacity no one can refuse to meet them. The only duty incumbent upon the medical man in such circumstances is to treat the female doctor not only with the courtesy due to a colleague, but with the special consideration due to a gentlewoman'.[22]

It is in relation to the accepted ethics concerning consultations that Fane is most at fault in the text. Visiting the hypochondriac patient referred to above, his

---

18 West, *op.cit.*, p.64.

19 Garrett Anderson, 'An Address on Medical Ethics', *Magazine of the London School of Medicine for Women and the Royal Free Hospital*, no.5, (10/1896), 176.

20 Thomas Percival, *Medical Ethics; or, a Code of Institutes and Precepts Adapted to the Professional Conduct of Physicians and Surgeons*, Manchester 1803, p.33.

21 *ibid.*, p.52.

22 West, *op.cit.*, p.73.

'quick little frowns and slight liftings of the brow as he listened implied such disapproval of Miss Romney's treatment as soothed, and, at the same time, stimulated Mrs. Harvey's remembrance of her sufferings under it' (vol.1 pp.195-6). Initially, the text does not position the reader to consider such behaviour in relation to medical ethics. Indeed, Fane's acquisition of Romney's patients is achieved with only one suggestion on the part of himself and Fullagher of the need to adhere to any ethical considerations and, significantly, this is in relation to Fane's only poor patient - Mrs Nicholson. That is, ethics are adhered to only in relation to a patient who will be of no economic advantage to Fane. Fullagher advises him to ensure that Mrs Nicholson has not been attended by the local quack, Garthorpe, in case 'of a row with you on some point of etiquette' (vol.2 p.126). On hearing from Mr Nicholson that Garthorpe has not visited his wife for many months, Fane replies '[t]hen it's all right ... I couldn't attend your wife, you know, if another doctor was engaged' (vol.2 p.127). Fane's scruples are hypocritical. The reader now realises that Fane has indeed attended former patients of another doctor - Edith - before she has been dismissed. Strictly speaking this is unethical practice, yet we have seen no evidence of Fane's reluctance to attend them, merely his delight in defeating Romney. Now, in the case of a poor patient, Fane takes the moral highground. Further, Mr Nicholson lies to Fane and Fullagher and tells them Romney too has been dismissed, seeing that 'it was evident that trivial as it was both doctors would make much of it' (vol.2 p.127). The narrative's attention to Fane's sudden adherence to ethics in relation to Mrs Nicholson and the subsequent delineation of his explicitly unethical behaviour when he does attend her are ingenious narrative strategies for reminding the reader of the unethical way in which he has appropriated Edith's wealthy patients.

Visiting Mrs Nicholson, Fane prescribes an alternative drug to the perfectly acceptable one prescribed by Romney and throws away her medicine with a derogatory gesture. His action is in part motivated by disgust at Mr Nicholson but not entirely: 'It may have [also] been partly from the professional instinct to depreciate a rival's method in order to set a higher value upon his own ... "Send to my house to-night and you shall have another mixture," said Fane, carelessly.' (vol.2 p.135) By omitting to consult with Edith and by rejecting her treatment, Fane casts aspersions on her medical diagnosis and expertise. He also overrides her diagnosis of the acceptable treatment of women by men: Mr Nicholson's hatred of Edith derives from her refusal to condone his violent treatment of his wife. As a consequence of Fane's dismissal of the medicine she has prescribed, rumours

spread that the 'Lady Doctor' attempts to poison patients and Edith's noble attempts to practise amongst the poor are thwarted. Later in the text, Fane compounds this unethical behaviour when he refuses to attend a patient in consultation with Edith, his refusal stemming from an admitted 'strong prejudice against lady medical practitioners' (vol.2 p.170).

It is thus through a combination of manipulative charm and a disregard for ethics that Fane destroys Romney's practice. On this level the text condemns the male practitioner and affirms the rightness of Romney's motives for undertaking a medical career. Fane himself comes to realise that her choice of profession was not 'the careless matter it had been to himself ... she had felt a true and earnest conviction of her vocation for it' (vol.2 pp.217-8). Yet such a simplistic contrast between their alternative motives for practising medicine is effected within a text which simultaneously works to affirm Edith's own culpability in the loss of her patients. In order that the reader accept the elevation of Fane to the status of hero and his alliance with Romney at the close of the text, his former actions must be justified, his guilt displaced and his penance perceived as both genuine and *unnecessary*. The text attains this objective through progressively affirming Fane's manhood and Edith's womanhood as significations of his suitability and her unsuitability for a medical career. Inescapable, gender-specific qualities enable the transposition of guilt from Fane and the townsfolk onto Edith. The professional skill of both doctors remains external to the text's judgment. There is no implication that Romney's medical expertise is inferior to Fane's.[23] Instead, the text defines a successful doctor as one who is capable of comprehending and engaging with the competitive conditions of medical work.

Immediately prior to her mental and physical collapse, Edith makes an impassioned speech to Fane where she argues that her failed career is a derivative of cultural perceptions of female nature which result in the construction of unfair and excessive barriers and burdens making it 'impossible for us [women] to compete with men' (vol.3 p.97). One narrative strand throughout the text does offer a partial critique of the male-controlled economic system which debars women on the grounds of custom and prejudice rather than ability. However, counter-narrative strategies posit Edith's failure as an inevitable derivative of her weaker female

23 The text's refusal to define Edith's medical expertise as inferior to Fane's is similar to Sergeant's refusal to define Valentine's intellect as inferior to men's in *No Ambition* and has the same implication: women may be able to attain 'male' learning but should they?

nature which is incapable of successfully infiltrating the competitive market-place. Her expertise is irrelevant, for her sex itself ensures that her value as a commodity is inferior to the male doctor's, for, as Chutterworth puts it 'All female labour is inferior in the market' (vol.1 p.273). It is how others perceive Edith as a commodity which decides her success or failure within the market. This may be a consequence of custom and prejudice, and may be, as Edith argues, unfair; nonetheless, it is her womanly failure to either understand or weather the vagaries of competition in the capitalist, public sphere which is the most significant factor in her downfall.

The pre-history of the novel delineated in the opening of the text asserts that prior to Edith's arrival, Fullagher's medical work in the town provided him with both a secure income and a sense of fulfilment. Romney's infiltration of his sphere destroyed his livelihood when the capriciousness of the townsfolk turned its attention to the 'Lady Doctor' as a fashionable cause. Although it is noted that Fullagher does not suffer financial hardship as a result of her advent, the loss of Romney's patients, and her subsequent suffering as a consequence of enforced idleness, mirrors the effects her own arrival had on Fullagher. Edith, unlike Fane, did not deliberately aim to steal patients from another doctor. Yet her practice is made up of patients who, according to medical ethics, belonged to another physician. Fane's failure to consult with Romney and his acquisition of all but two of her former patients cannot be condemned without an intimation that Romney herself was unaware of the effects of her ascendancy in the town upon Fullagher. In contrast, from the moment Fane arrives he perceives Edith as an economic competitor who must be defeated. Her culpability, however, lies not in her deliberate rejection of ethics in favour of competition but in her female naivety which prevents her from comprehending both the competitive nature of work in the male public sphere and her value, or rather, lack of value, as a marketable commodity.

The novel presents Dr Edith Romney as being naive to an absurd degree. Despite being confronted with the horror and shock of her family at her desire to be a doctor; despite the reaction of her patients when they hear of Fane's arrival; and despite the worldly advice of the estimable Miss Jacques, well-versed in the derogation of women by society, Edith persists in retaining a blinkered attitude to opposition to her role. Naive as to human nature and its capriciousness, and failing to observe the threat Fane might pose to her practice, she refuses to countenance the thought of failure: 'Success seemed natural. She took it undoubtingly, with [no] ... nervous fearfulness ... [n]o fear of losing it disturbed her; she enjoyed it without alloy - as unquestioningly and completely as a little child enjoys the possession of

some coveted toy.' (vol.1 pp.61-2) The analogy between Edith's practise of medicine and a child's pleasure in playing with a toy indicates clearly that she has no conception of the mode in which market forces operate in the 'real' world. This inscription of her naivety is reinforced in her distaste for the monetary transactions which are a necessary element of her work: 'really if people knew how I disliked to be reminded that they pay me! ... [i]f I had my own way I would never hear the word money mentioned by my patients' (vol.1 p.263). On learning of Fane's arrival Edith persists in the belief that '[t]here is room for him as well as for me' (vol.1 p.72). In the course of the novel she is educated. She is forced to learn that her career is not just a matter of doing useful work but a matter of economic transactions requiring competitive manipulation of herself as a commodity. Simply, she learns that society, and within it gender roles, works to uphold economic systems formulated by a patriarchally controlled capitalist order.

On a practical level she is taught by the machinations of Fane and Fullagher which effect loss of her practice. Too naive to interpret the situation herself, Miss Jacques acts as the interpreter of events for her. First, she teaches Edith that Fullagher's hatred of her derives from her 'abnormal' behaviour:

> 'Of course Dr Fullagher hates you! He despises women - he regards them as fools and dolls - and naturally he is enraged when one of the dolls carves out for herself a career as good as his own, and thus upsets all his chivalrous theories. And still more must he hate the woman who, while so going her own way, brushes so inconveniently against him. You have spoilt his practice ... and to punish you for your daring he brings in his handsome, attractive, unmarried friend, who is to win all from you and drive you from the field.' (vol.1 pp.148-9)

Further lessons follow. Edith is taught that qualifications alone do not secure a successful practice - there is something more, and 'this something more was a knack of management, which Edith had till now despised most heartily ... but which, she was beginning with some disgust to find, would be perhaps necessary after all, *when competition pressed her harder* ' (vol.1 p.166) [my italics]. In direct contrast Fane knows that '[a] certain amount of humbug is necessary ... if you want to get on ... call it business tact' (vol.1 p.207). Edith, unlike Fane, has not realised that in the market-place she must sell herself.

Edith's failure to relate her decision to practise medicine to economics prevents her from assessing the consequences of Fane's arrival. As a woman she has no means of forming a defence mechanism which might enable her to retaliate

and compete with him. The qualities purported to be an essential part of the female character and asserted by those in favour of women doctors to be useful in a medical career - tenderness and compassion - are the essence of Edith. Yet it is these qualities which effect her downfall for she is unable to manipulate them to compete with Fane. She is thus guilty in the text as a woman. Initially Edith is self-confident and assertive, yet still ladylike. She handles her patients with gentleness and tact. As the novel proceeds the problems she encounters cannot be overcome by these qualities for they cannot overcome, indeed they signify, the single factor that precludes her success - her womanhood and its lack of marketable value.

The swift destruction of Edith's practice is portrayed with some subtlety. None of her patients defects because of her lack of medical skill, although most automatically define it as inferior to Fane's because she is a woman. Instead, the playing out of economic exchanges, ironically, not just in the public market but also in the private causes the defections. Thus, Chutterworth implies that he is dropping Romney for Fane because there is no economic advantage in employing a woman doctor who charges the same as a man: 'Seems queer for a lady to charge as much as a h'ordinary doctor ... [w]hy, if that's to be the little game, we may as well 'ave the real h'article at once.' (vol.2 p.273) In fact, Chutterworth drops Edith not, as he implies, because of his reading of her place within public economic hierarchies but because of his desire to invest in the marriage market: he is hoping for a match between Fane and his daughter. This pattern is repeated in varying forms. Mrs Ardley stops consulting Edith because she resents her son's attentions to Edith's niece which are interfering with her own plans for him in the marriage market. Mrs Latimer starts consulting Fane because she has discovered her son's inappropriate attraction to the 'Lady Doctor' and because she too has hopes of a match between her daughter, Violet, and the male doctor.

Thus, Fane can use his 'masculinity' to promote his own interests in both the medical (public) and the marriage (private) market. The link between the private marriage market and the capitalist market-place thus works to Fane's advantage. His ability to compete successfully within both market-places denotes his ability to compete as an individual. On the other hand, Edith's 'femininity', signified by her bodily appearance, is at odds with her profession and therefore works in the opposite mode. Her medical career makes her a bad marital catch. Her beauty, unlike his handsomeness, does not enhance her professional capacity but serves to remind her (women-only) patients of their shared womanhood. Edith comes to realise that 'had they been man and man, they would have been equal' (vol.2

p.203). Instead, whilst Fane's 'attractions were all to his advantage', Edith's 'added to the weight of the first great drawback - her womanhood' (vol.2 p.203).

Edith's failure to retain her practice thus derives from the 'fundamental and immovable' (vol.2 p.102) fact of her womanhood which both prevents her from competing as an individual within the public market, and which is perceived as a threat to appropriate exchanges within the private market. Her naivety, her failure to compete to retain her practice, her physical and mental collapse, are all derivations of her female nature. The text's positioning of her as first and foremost 'lady' rather than 'doctor' is most forcibly, albeit ambiguously, presented in her physical collapse. Despite her medical training, Edith is always presented as inherently womanly. Yet initially she is also proof of the absurdity of the arguments quoted earlier that women lack the necessary stamina to practise medicine. Her constitution withstands long hours and night-time calls and she is hardened to the sight of physical suffering. Nonetheless, an erosion of her physical and mental well-being parallels the erosion of her practice. Incapable of protecting her own health, she becomes in danger of losing the ability to protect that of others as the sight of blood becomes unendurable to her, something which further 'prove[s] her woman's weakness' (vol.2 p.285). Her mental health deteriorates alongside her physical health and she succumbs to brain fever, a popular Victorian literary convention, and particularly suitable for denoting the nervous disposition of women.

Edith's lack of control over her body's physical and mental reaction to her failed career is the ultimate signifier of her as woman. She is transformed from one who diagnoses and gives signification to the sick body, into a body that is signified and diagnosed by men. She proves herself emotionally, mentally, physically and socially incapable of economic competition with Fane. Ironically, and somewhat ambivalently, it is in part her increasing *inactivity* which causes her illness. Nonetheless, her collapse is a fitting indication of her own sarcastic acknowledgment '[m]y crime is my womanhood' (vol.3 p.95). Her inversion of the properly gendered hierarchy in wanting to give, to be independent, to act, is now reversed as she becomes dependent on and passively (literally unconsciously) receives from her former enemies - the male doctors. Drs Fullagher and Fane, as stated above, define women according to their own desires. Miss Jacques points to the inadequacy of such definitions: 'Your selfishness is ludicrously transparent. Women are to be this, that, and the other, not for themselves, not for their own comfort and advantage, but because men like them to be so!' (vol.3 p.169) Yet male definitions of woman's abilities are upheld in the text and the validity of Fane

and Fullaghers' diagnoses concerning women in the male medical sphere are spectacularly proved by Edith's downfall and her complete bodily and mental collapse.

This triumph over Edith the 'doctor' now denotes her as just a 'lady' and might be read as a punishment for her deviance from the norm. Indeed, Fane himself first perceives the 'contest' as a means to punish her: 'The woman ... who daringly strikes into a path kept sacred to masculine feet ... was hateful to Fane's mind. Her daring called for immediate chastisement; her triumphs ought to be re-triumphed over; her success atoned for by complete and humiliating defeat.' (vol.1 p.191) [24] The methods by which Fane attains his desire are not condoned. Yet the text does not name him guilty. Somewhat unconvincingly, Dr Fullagher has never met Edith, despite her two year presence in the town. He and Fane assume she is a strong-minded, strident and unattractive woman. Fane's destruction of Edith emanates from his desire to teach her that to be a woman competing with men means defeat and humiliation. Ironically, though, it is his very failure to remember what 'womanhood' signifies which prevents him from recalling that competition in his male sphere will affect her physically and mentally in a mode to which he is immune. Thus, for example, although annoyed at Nicholson's rumours about the 'poison', he is indifferent to the effect they have on Romney, and '[h]ad a similar charge been made against himself, he would have laughed it to scorn. He did not reflect that circumstances might make such indifference impossible for the lady' (vol.2 p.149).

Importantly, when Fane first looks upon Edith, as when Achilles looked upon Penthesilea, he is struck by her physical beauty; now he recalls what it means to be a woman and repents of his unchivalrous actions. [25] While Fullagher still maintains that '[a] woman who leaves her own sphere and proper work must prepare herself for the mortification and hard dealings the world awards to all its workers' (vol.2 p.178), Fane now perceives it is '[a] pitiful sort of triumph - winning bread from a woman!' (vol.1 p.176) Falling in love with her, he proceeds to attempt to reverse his formerly unethical behaviour by calling her in on a case as a way to 'tell her and the

---

24 There is a play here on the word 'sacred' and Fane's name: 'fane' means 'temple'.

25 It is Fullagher who likens Fane and Romney to Achilles and Penthesilea. This is the text's rather obvious means of foregrounding Fane's love for her and his regret at his destruction of her medical practice. The comparison also sets up a degree of suspense, especially when Edith is ill. Will her fate be that of Penthesilea? Fullagher, in part, plays the role of Thersites.

whole town that he recognised her as a fellow-practitioner, and that he respected her qualifications' (vol.2 p.69). However, Fane has not reversed his opinions about 'Lady Doctors'; his atonement is an attempt to accord himself a role as her guardian by transforming her from a competitor to be defeated into a woman to be protected.

It is when Edith comes under the medical protection of Fullagher and Fane that she finally becomes acceptable, for now her apparent difference from other women has been negated. Once Edith has been taught that it is her womanliness which has secured her failure, once she has been reduced to a state of physical and mental collapse ensuring she will never practise in the town again, she can be treated with a male chivalry not appropriate within the market-place she has formerly attempted to infiltrate. Fane can now assert her professional competence and her noble motives while retaining his stance on 'Lady Doctors': Edith has now learnt, as he and Fullagher already knew, that because a medical career cannot sublimate 'femininity', she can never operate successfully within competitive economics. Once Edith has been brought to a full awareness of her inability to compete in a male sphere, the male-bonding system, from which she was previously excluded, generously affords her the chance to remove herself from a sphere in which she is not welcome and place herself in a hospital for women and children where she will not be required to compete with other men.

In fact, we never see Edith take up this post. The text remains silent on any definitive stance on women doctors and avoids the necessity of confronting its own ambivalence by a switch of emphasis from the professional to the romantic. Fullagher's apparent rejection of misogyny, a misogyny characterised by his determination to position all women as alike in their weakness ('[y]ou have taught me one thing, and that is, that it is absurd to speak of women as if they were one and all made in the same mould' (vol.1 p.161)) has not negated his dislike of women doctors. He can assert that Edith is different, an individual, an exception to the rule ('I don't class you with the others' (vol.1 p.161)) only after it has been amply demonstrated by her failure to compete with Fane that she is indeed no exception. The closure of the text does not restore Edith to her former status as a successful 'Lady Doctor', despite her claim to Fane that 'my profession ... is part of me' (vol.1 p.234). Instead, the text closes with an example of her womanly feelings. The tenderness and compassion which named her woman and inept within the public economic environment are now seen to operate within their rightful market-place - ' "Oh," she exclaimed in a low, passionate, tender voice, "you have suffered so! I will try - oh, I will try to make you forget it and be happy again" ' (vol.1 p.298).

3.2 Ill-health and the 'Lady Doctor'

Dr Edith Romney's inability to engage with an economic system dependent upon individual competition within the market is most strongly implied in her temporary loss of control over her physical and mental health; this denotes a weakness which can only be 'cured' by the prescriptions of her male rivals. Indeed, one of the most common ways in which female to male difference was inscribed in Victorian medical discourse was through pronouncements concerning woman's 'innate' proclivity for ill-health. The body as a signifying site was itself hierarchised, with the female body written as a 'commodity' with less sustainable value. Contemporary researchers have documented the modes in which women during the period were defined by the male medical profession as continually prone to disease.[26] It has been noted that women's health, in these terms, was typically diagnosed in relation to sexual anatomy and the mental corollaries perceived to arise from sexual 'illness'.[27] Normal bodily functions were transformed through the eyes of a conditioned medical profession into dangerous occurrences which signified the unstable mental and physical state of the female. An early eighteenth-century publication, for example, states that prolapsed wombs are caused by masturbation and 'immoderate Exercise', especially 'Dancing' and 'Leaping'.[28] Medical advancements in the nineteenth century did not dispel such obsessions with female sexual/reproductive 'aberrations'. Thus, for example, it was intimated that masturbation caused uterine disease, labour turned sane pregnant women insane, and womb disease could be diagnosed by watching for signs of 'hysteria;

---

26 See, for example, Mary S. Hartman and Lois W. Banner (eds), *Clio's Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives on the History of Women*, London 1974; Sara Delamont and Lorna Duffin (eds), *The Nineteenth-Century Woman: Her Cultural and Physical World*, New York 1978; Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady. Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980*, London 1987 [first published 1985]. See, also, 'M.D.C.', 'Female Medicine', *The English Woman's Journal*, 12, (1/1864), 339: 'There was a time when good physical health was deemed a somewhat gross characteristic in any woman ... [t]hat period, thank Heaven, has passed away; but there remains a corresponding idea that 'delicacy' - in the medical sense - is an admirable mental and moral trait.'

27 See, for example, Showalter, *ibid.*, pp. 75-8.

28 'A Physician', *The Ladies Physical Directory; or, a Treatise of all the Weaknesses, Indispositions and Diseases Peculiar to the Female Sex from Eleven Years of Age, to Fifty or Upwards*, London 1727 [third edition], p.36.

morbid depression of spirits; irritability of temper ... sleeplessness'.[29] Women were said to become infertile through lack of care during puberty and deformed babies were seen to result from over-excitement during pregnancy.[30] Such diagnoses were obviously conditioned by nineteenth-century culture and were attempts to determine and confine appropriate female activities. Dr Robert Bell, for example, amidst his affirmations on the state of the female body and how to keep it healthy writes: 'Education is all very well ... [but w]oman's sphere is not to sparkle in the realms of literature, but to shine with a clear, steady and warm light in her home'.[31] For many, 'feminine' delicacy itself was seen to be manifested in physical or mental ill-health: a delicate or nervous constitution signified a womanly nature.[32]

The medical notion that women were prone to illness due to innate (usually reproductive) characteristics was clearly a physical/medical corollary of hierarchical notions of gender inscribed in other discourses. In the medical arena such claims were an attempt to denote woman's lack of difference through 'credible' scientific realities. Thus, a woman, unlike a man, was seen to be imprisoned by her physical state. Unable to sublimate it, she was seen as governed inadvertently by her body's promptings and could not, therefore, attain genuine autonomy. A woman aspiring to be a doctor was perceived, in this context, to be manifesting her innate illness in mind, itself a derivation of her physical weakness. The aspiration on the part of a woman to become a doctor could only be a false claim to an individuality which was only genuinely manifested in the male. The desire in itself therefore signified mental deficiency. A letter to the *Lancet* from a 'mental physician', ironically in support of medical women, makes explicit such a link between a display of 'individuality' and an unwomanly nature:

> it is the inmost nature of the character of the self-asserting women to be independent. She needs no other half to complete her being. Her individuality is in high development,

---

29 Sources, respectively, from Lombe Atthill, *Clinical Lectures on Diseases Peculiar to Women*, Dublin 1883 [seventh edition, revised and enlarged], p.31; 'A Surgeon and Accoucheur', in *Girlhood and Wifehood. Practical Counsel and Advice*, London n.d. [1896], p.253, who writes of woman in labour that '[h]er state of mind is one almost bordering upon insanity and is manifested by actions, deeds, and words so contrary to the general habit and nature of the patient as to prove that she cannot be under the proper control of her reason'; and Robert Bell, *Woman in Health and Sickness; or, What She Ought to Know for the Exigencies of Daily Life*, Glasgow 1889, p.73.

30 See 'A Surgeon and Accoucheur', *op.cit.*, pp.196-8.

31 Bell, *op.cit*, p.8.

32 For a further discussion of delicacy see chapter 4, pp.129-141 below.

> if not in excess. She is very generally unsexual ... the development of the cerebral activities often counterbalancing other functions to a quite unnatural extent ... if she very frequently displays want of delicacy, it is not the indelicacy of an immodest woman, but of one obtuse to the influence of certain impressions, and sometimes also defiant of certain customary proprieties.[33]

Here, female individuality is not denied *per se*, instead its development denotes the unnaturalness of female to female difference. Similar notions were disseminated in a wide range of medical ideas. One doctor, for example, even claims that the sex of the unborn child 'is determined at conception' according to whether 'the individuality of the one parent or the other impresses itself most': given the prevailing patriarchal culture and its insistence upon male inheritance, this was an innovative attempt to control female desire by indicating the undesirability of permitting the development of female individuality.[34]

The perceived danger in condoning the free development of female individuality, along with the common notion that women are innately prone to ill-health, directly fed into equally insidious conceptions of female morality and spirituality. Indeed, the obsession of medical writers with female sexual diseases arose partly from an internalisation of the populist theological perspective that woman's tendency to immoral action and her inferior spiritual status were an inheritance from Eve: not only was woman's punishment for Eve's transgression reproduction and its accompanying 'illnesses' but also an inherited inability to behave in a consistently moral manner. All women were seen to share in the repercussions of Eve's Fall.[35] Hence, again, female autonomy was denied.

As noted earlier, the Victorian medical profession placed emphasis on the moral and spiritual duties of the physician. Given popular conceptions of woman's proclivity for sinning, it is not surprising that it was asserted that permitting women to train as doctors would expose them to potentially immoral and corrupting influences which would impair their slim grasp upon morality. Women, it was asserted, are not 'morally qualified for many of the onerous, important, and confidential duties of the general practitioner'.[36] Allowing women to practise

---

33 'A Mental Physician', 'Female Medicine', [Letter to the Editor], *The Lancet*, 1, (21/5/1870), 752.

34 'A Surgeon and Accoucheur', *op.cit.*, p.190.

35 While men were seen to share in the repercussions of Adam's part in the fall, in populist theology, at least, it was Eve who stood as the figurehead for sin.

36 Anon., 'Female Doctors', *The Lancet*, 2, (2/8/1873), 159.

medicine would let loose their 'innate' inclination to moral corruption within just that sphere where moral rectitude was most required. Patients were at risk and the reputation of the medical profession at stake! In the 1870s, the outrage expressed over the purported 'misbehaviour' of female students training in Zurich is a good indicator of the extent to which it was assumed that permitting women the opportunity to display 'individuality' only proved their inability to uphold moral givens. This, yet again, further named them unindividual in their common corruptible nature. Both the *Medical Press and Circular* and the *Lancet* reported the events in Zurich as proof of the folly of opening the British medical profession to women. A letter to the latter states:

> I think you should oppose the movement in favour of women doctors with all your power. The reputation - nay, the very existence of our noble profession is the question at issue. Let women attend to the work for which nature has designed them, and let men occupy their own positions.
> My chief object in writing to you, is to draw your attention to the medical school at Zurich ... and the doings of the female students there. A short time ago their conduct was so bad that the Emperor of Russia ordered them from Russia to return to their homes ... I could never find out the particulars of their bad conduct. But an inference, and one of the worst kind, can be drawn.[37]

Thus, woman's moral culpability was seen as a corollary of her physical and mental proclivity for ill-health. Further, the diseased female body also came to be constructed as a contradictory and ambiguous signifying site of woman's mental, physical and moral instability. Thus, it was written as a site which signified desirable female weakness and inferiority, yet simultaneously the powerful threat of contagious female corruption. It was constructed as a site which denoted diseased 'femininity', yet provoked desire. It was perceived as a site to be objectified and restrained but seen as always in danger of eluding control. These conflicts, generated by competing cultural significations of 'innate' mental, physical and moral female ill-health, were particularly magnified when associated with one specific disease: tuberculosis (T.B.). Consumption, as it was more commonly known, did not, of course, affect only women. Nonetheless, both the physical effects of the disease and the shifting cultural myths associated with it in the Victorian period

---

37 J.C. Orchard, 'Medical Women', [Letter to the Editor], *The Lancet*, 2, (22/11/1873), 762.

made the female consumptive body a particularly conducive site as a repository for both cultural anxieties *and* expectations about gender.

Susan Sontag's *Illness as Metaphor* offers pertinent insights into the complex metaphorical significations of T.B. Her initial premise is that the myths surrounding consumption in the nineteenth century were responses to 'a disease not understood' during a period when 'medicine's central premise is that all diseases can be cured. Such a disease is, by definition, mysterious'.[38] A mysterious disease, Sontag argues, promotes fear, and a disease 'acutely enough feared will be felt to be morally, if not literally, contagious'.[39] From this starting point, Sontag goes on to outline the modes in which the consumptive body was a site of contradictory significations linked to common conceptions of death and desire. Consumption was both glamourised and feared, linked with both sexual/emotional passion and repression, and was seen as both a moral contagion and a signifier of romantic sensibility and genius.[40]

One of Sontag's central contentions is that the use of T.B. as a metaphor came to the fore as concepts of individuality came to predominate in the eighteenth century. Previously, illness as metaphor had been largely associated with the body politic.[41] As notions of personhood developed in the eighteenth century, conceptions of illness shifted alongside them. Diseases as metaphors became associated with the individual and became 'tropes for new attitudes toward the self'.[42] In particular, Sontag notes, '[i]t is with T.B. that the idea of individual illness was articulated, along with the idea that people are made more conscious as they confront their deaths, and in the images that collected around the disease one can see emerging a modern idea of individuality'.[43] By the nineteenth century, the individualisation of disease, and of T.B. in particular, had led to the concept that disease 'expresses character. It is a product of will'.[44] The consumptive body thus came to be written as a product of itself, with T.B. emanating from the individual's repression of excessive passions or feelings which are then inadvertently expressed in their projection onto the physical, seen in the body's consumption of

---

38 Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors*, London 1990, p.5.

39 *ibid.*, p.6.

40 See *ibid.*, pp. 18, 20-1, 25-6, 32-34, 46-47.

41 Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* is a good example.

42 Sontag, *op.cit.*, p.28.

43 *ibid.*, p.30.

44 *ibid.*, p.43.

itself. Thus, T.B., writes Sontag, 'is the disease ... that discloses, in spite of the reluctance of the individual, what the individual does not want to reveal'.[45] T.B., in its cultural construction, thus became an expression of the self's diseased mentality.

Sontag's analysis of the importance of the rise of individualism in relation to the metaphorical connotations of consumption is an essential starting point. However, Sontag does not take into account two important factors: first, that concepts of individualism were not only inherently class-biased but also inherently gender-biased; and second, and partially consequently, that much Victorian discourse concerned with gender constructs woman as inherently prone to mental, physical and moral ill-health as a denotation of her lack of autonomy/individuality. Both of these factors made the *female* consumptive body a particularly insidious site of cultural anxiety. Sontag notes that by the nineteenth century consumption had become 'a manner of appearing ... [i]t was glamorous to look sickly' and that 'the tubercular look, which symbolized an appealing vulnerability, a superior sensitivity, became more and more the ideal look for women'.[46] Sontag does not deconstruct this feminisation of the disease. This is a pity, for it has an interesting impact on the contradictory and competing cultural myths linked with T.B. which she articulates so cogently. Moreover, when considered in the wider context of more general conceptions of a correlation between 'femininity' and sickness, the metaphorical associations of consumption have an interesting resonance: the Victorian female consumptive body both replicates and generates the contradictions projected onto constructions of gender during the period and reaffirms the incurable nature of diseased, morally contagious woman. If T.B. is read metaphorically as an inadvertent expression of a lack of control over the self, then the Victorian female consumptive body becomes an exaggerated metaphor for the status of all Victorian women: all women are consumed, eaten up by their lack of control over their bodies as a signification of their own moral, mental and physical instability. Further, that instability in itself is then transformed into an admirable trait for it both writes the body as something that needs to be controlled and saved from itself and as something that can never be cured of its 'femininity'.

---

45 *ibid.*, p.45.

46 *ibid.*, pp.28, 30.

Elizabeth Thomasina Meade's novel *The Medicine Lady* (1892) uses T.B. to explore anxieties surrounding control over medical diagnoses. Cecilia Digby, the female protagonist, contains the 'taint' of consumption. Significantly, the very presence of this 'taint' signifies not just her physical but also her moral instability. Further, consumption is written in the text as a necessary signifier of Cecilia's innate tendency to disease (in body, mind, and spirit) and, thus, as a signifier of her womanliness. Through the inscription of consumption as both a literal disease and a metaphorical denotation of 'femininity', the text asserts the importance of male control over the unstable and threatening female body; and thus of male control over the medical arena. In particular, the text writes female illness itself as desirable through its demonstration of the dangers of curing the consumptive female body of its own inadvertent manifestation of appropriate female weakness.

The text's delineation of the fatal effects of Cecilia's attempt to appropriate control of the female body is preceded by a delineation of the moral and mental superiority of the 'ideal' male doctor. At its simplest, the text works to prove that medical practitioners, while alleviating physical human suffering, must acknowledge the primacy of the soul over the mortal body. Given the perceived spiritual inadequacy of women in the period it is no surprise that the text also demonstrates a female inability to operate with proficiency in the medical arena. Initially, we are presented with two contrasting male medical practitioners: Laurence Digby and James Phillips. The former is the epitome of the 'ideal' doctor. He displays typical and appropriate 'masculine' qualities in his work. He is forthright and discerning in his diagnoses of female illness: 'He never failed to express his true thoughts ... He did not hesitate to tell women what he thought of their ailments ... they must put aside all imagining, or they would get but little sympathy from Digby'.[47] For Digby, the doctor's ability to alleviate physical suffering must be accompanied by an understanding of the importance of a suitable moral and spiritual framework of belief:

> 'It is the grandest or the basest thing in the world to be a doctor ... The man who takes up the medical profession ought to love it better than his life. Neither the desire for money nor for fame ought to influence him. The Heaven-born doctor has been sent into the world to make suffering less. Each day of his life he has to keep death at bay. It is impossible for him to treat his calling lightly.' (vol.1 p.74)

47 L.T. Meade [Elizabeth Thomasina], *The Medicine Lady*, London 1892, vol.1, p.72. All further quotations are from this edition and will be referred to in the main text by volume and page number.

The moral rectitude of Digby is pointed to by the narrator again and again: Digby revolutionises the moral climate of the hospital he works in; Digby persuades a suicidal woman who falsely believes she suffers from consumption of the virtue of a Godly life; Digby, his daughter Nance informs us, never loses a patient - he either heals their body or sends them to heaven with a trusting heart! Conjoint with his acknowledgment of the spiritual significance of his calling is his affirmation of the importance of the patient's soul above the importance of the body. Thus, he will not risk the use of his imperfect cure for consumption partly because the potential opportunity for giving bodily succour cannot take precedence over moral considerations.[48]

Digby's noble qualities as a doctor can be summarised as emanating from one prime quality: originality. The reader is told explicitly that this quality is in abundance in Digby but is lacking in the self-seeking and envious James Phillips. The latter is ambitious and manipulating and wants to purloin Digby's cure for personal benefit. Phillips's attitude towards both his profession and family life lacks the moral refinement of Digby's. The prolonged and rather obvious contrasts drawn between the moral rectitude of the two doctors appear for a large part of the text to be its *raison d'être*. However, it becomes apparent that the difference between Digby and Phillips merely demonstrates the varying permutations of behaviour exhibited by the male *through choice*. Phillips, we are told, could develop his latent originality to good effect if he could set aside his worldly aspirations. In fact, the more important differences constructed in the text are between male medical work and female; and between the originality and morality of Digby and the inescapable and pre-determined corruptibility and lack of originality of the heroine.

Cecilia Digby, the medicine lady, appropriates the role of healer belonging to the male, convinced of her superior moral understanding of the suffering of humankind. The devastating affects of her attempt to grasp the right to individual decision making and action, which the text asserts she has no justified claim to, point ultimately to her 'feminine' nature. Her challenge to male decisions and

---

48 Digby's refusal to test his cure is not, however, without ambivalence. See p.109 below.

creative science is inherently more dangerous than the unethical and despicable ambitions of Phillips. While he at times evinces elements which suggest his moral conscience lies dormant, it is Cecilia's 'feminine' nature which cannot be sublimated and must be contained for the (literal) protection of society. Significantly, the narrator gives one of the first indicators that Cecilia's consumptive body is a threat in an apparently unimportant comment. Her mother, we learn, 'had only the germs of that originality which was to mark Cecilia by-and-by' (vol.1 p.43). The combination of the words 'germs' and 'original' is more significant than it first appears, for we later learn that Mrs Harvey died of consumption and, therefore, that Cecilia and her daughter Nance contain the same 'taint'.[49]

It is striking that the prime quality associated with the female characters who contain the 'taint' of consumption is stated to be originality.[50] Whenever this originality is referred to it is with fear, as a signification of the threatening nature of the disease. Thus Dorothy's mother tells Digby that her daughter 'has always ... been a radiant sort of creature. Brilliant is the best word ... [f]rom her earliest days she never did anything in the common way - she was always original ... just a little bit too original' (vol.2 p.26). When Phillips wants to scare Cecilia about her daughter's health he only has to suggest 'I never met anyone so absolutely original as your little Nance' (vol.2 p.74). Indeed, the text explicitly links female originality with disease. Nance's 'very genius is but a part of that malady which she was born to inherit' (vol.2 p.59), Digby tells Cecilia. Originality and creative genius, when evidenced in the male (Digby) are admired, when evidenced in the female are a sign of the body's consumption by disease.[51] Thus, female originality is denoted as 'unnatural', a correlation of disease, while, paradoxically, female tendency to disease itself is written in the text as a consequence and signifier of unoriginal 'femininity'.

An early intimation that it is Cecilia's 'feminine' nature which has made her prone to T.B. is given in the portrayals of her inability to control her body's

---

49 T.B. was commonly thought to be hereditary.

50 It is also striking that the text portrays T.B. threatening only women and working-class men: middle-class men are further distanced from disease by this.

51 Sontag notes that, in the nineteenth century, T.B. was typically seen to afflict those with creative genius. Victorian constructions of gender which denoted women unoriginal thus came into conflict with metaphorical constructions of the disease which linked it with genius/originality: hence, in Meade's text, T.B. denotes originality but female originality evidenced in the consumptive body is a threat and a signifier of diseased 'femininity'.

manifestations of its consumption by excessive feelings. As a nurse she is unable to bear the sight of physical suffering and her patients are placed at risk by her over preponderance of nerves and sentiment. These are typical 'female' attributes which conform with the popular belief that women are unfit for medical careers due to their weak character. Cecilia, we are told, 'was not thorough. She was not strong. She was all impulse ... [s]he neglected her most obvious duties, and then rushed in and did the things which no one expected of her, and which no one wished her to perform' (vol.1 p.21). More importantly, however, these character traits are those popularly projected onto the consumptive body, again reiterating the convergence of metaphorical constructions of T.B. with common cultural constructions of 'femininity': as a nurse Cecilia is totally unfit because 'the best nurses are not those who feel too much. You feel things a *great* deal too much' (vol.1 p.87).[52]

Once married to Digby, it becomes apparent that the character traits which precluded Cecilia's useful work in a hospital do not derive merely from a womanly shrinking from unpleasant sights but emanate from a lack of control; an instability which she inadvertently manifests particularly in times of crisis. Incapable of maintaining control over her body she exhibits symptoms of hysteria, nerves and over-excitement. Even when self-restraint is required to save the life of her own child she cannot sublimate her nature: 'I cannot control myself ... [m]y little child's life hangs in the balance, and I cannot see her - I cannot be with her because I am destitute of self-control. Oh, I thought I had overcome this feeling forever!' (vol.1 p.207)

Cecilia's frequent inability to prevent inadvertent expressions of her lack of control over her excessive emotions names her culpable for her own consumption. It discloses what she later seeks to suppress: her innate 'femininity'. Yet, as already intimated, while her inability to control her bodily and mental reactions is potentially dangerous, perversely it is desirable for it signifies her as a woman. Her very lack of control and excited nervous disposition which mark her body as consumptive also mark her as a woman. Cecilia's lack of control over her body/mind is her own inadvertent self-manifestation of the essence *of* herself - her femaleness. Thus, the consumption of her body by excessive feeling provides an overt means of reading her body as a site of instability; and thus also provides the possibility of decoding and controlling it.

---

52 See Sontag, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-6, 43-7, for a discussion of the contradictory and conflicting ideas about a purported link between excessive feelings and T.B.

For much of the text, Cecilia's consumptive 'taint', which signifies her diseased 'femininity', is rendered safe because it is protected and controlled by her husband: his admirable self-possession and medical rationale compensate for her lack of self-discipline. The potential danger her 'taint' poses is dissipated by the directives of this protector. Digby exhorts Cecilia to show restraint, to curb her emotions and their physical expression: 'You must try not to allow your feelings to get the better of you' (vol.1 p.224). Indeed, Digby explicitly relates her excitability and excessive morbid emotions to the possible advancement of the 'taint' within her and her daughter implying, again, the culpability of the T.B. sufferer: 'Your influence is not the best for her [Nance], Cecilia. You are too sensitive ... [y]ou have a great deal of morbidness in your nature; the child inherits that from you' (vol.2 p.60).[53] Moreover, while Cecilia's inability to control her body clearly signifies her inferior physical and mental status, this inability is directly related in the text to her lack of moral and spiritual discipline. Digby, with his medical (read male) powers of discrimination, comprehends the origin of his wife's lack of constraint and defines it for her. Her overpowering sense of nervousness, he says, 'is a sort of sensation, which, physical in itself, is best overcome by the exercise of the spiritual' (vol.2 p.147). Cecilia can overcome it, he continues, with '[t]he powerful two-edged sword of faith and prayer' (vol.2 p.147).

Digby is well-qualified to diagnose the root of Cecilia's 'taint', for not only does the text write him as a morally insightful character but his medical specialism is given as consumption, the galloping disease. Through his innovative medical treatment he successfully prolongs the lives of some of his consumptive patients. Indeed, after his death, the decline of his most successful case is attributed partly to her depression at losing her medical advisor - another example of the female's self-induced consumption of herself. Digby's successes with his patients are effected without the use of his partially developed cure for T.B.. He knows that he will never be able to halt completely the progression of the galloping disease and he refuses to experiment with the incomplete cure, insisting on its potential danger. Given the significance of the disease in nineteenth-century culture his half-hearted excuses as to why he has not developed his research are unconvincing: he claims that he has

53 This is in keeping with the popular belief that those with a melancholy 'disposition' were more prone to T.B.

been too busy providing for his family; that the medicine is too dangerous to be tested on humans; and that it cannot be tested on animals because their physiology is different from human physiology. He seems curiously averse to completing the cure. His caution is justified by the events after his death when the cure of the primary consumptive body in the text - Cecilia's - results in a disastrous negation of gender roles. It is the 'taint' of consumption itself which contains womanhood, in its very process of making overt and thus controllable the potential danger inherent in female originality. Hence, female ill-health, signified by the consumptive female body, is written as a necessary and desirable signification of womanhood itself. The threat of the female body is rendered much more dangerous when its manifestations of diseased 'femininity' are hidden and repressed and when it ceases to be under male control.

The narrative first begins to denote the consumptive female body a necessary outward signifier of female instability at the point where Cecilia is about to free herself from both her 'taint' and her husband's control. This liberation occurs as a result of the death of her husband following an accident on their phaeton. Importantly, the text's delineation of this episode is laden with metaphorical connotations which relate to its wider literal and metaphorical construction of consumption. During the mad ride into the night, on the out-of-control phaeton, Cecilia gains strength not from prayer, which provides only temporary relief, but from the fact that she is required to share the reins of the galloping horses with her husband: 'As Cecilia held the reins by his side she felt that she had slain the bogie of terror once and for ever. This knowledge gave her fresh courage; the mad race grew faster and faster, but she ceased to be terrified. The more she exercised self-control the calmer she grew.' (vol.2 p.159) This equine metaphor marks the point in the text where Cecilia begins to appropriate control over the treatment of consumption and begins to take over the reins which properly belong to her husband and his male colleagues. Digby's knowledge that his partial cure is unable to halt consumption is metaphorically acted out as he literally struggles and fails to halt the progress of the galloping horses. Cecilia's later apparent 'halt'/cure of/from consumption is also prefigured. Her use of the cure on herself and others is a deliberate act of disobedience against her dead husband and it is her inadvertent

disobedience of him during the mad ride which saves her life.[54] He exhorts her '[w]hatever happens, you must not jump out' (vol.2 p.159) but Cecilia, in a final manifestation of her inadvertent lack of bodily control, 'unable ... to keep her seat, was hurled from the trap' (vol.2 p.159).

As the narrative progresses it becomes apparent that this is the point at which Cecilia begins to tread a miswritten path. The 'proper' end for the fictive female consumptive sufferer is death - typically, an etherealised, resigned and spiritualised death.[55] Instead, Cecilia not only survives the mad race into the night but retains her new-found control over her excessive feelings. As Digby lies dying we learn that Cecilia has never been calmer. Apparently subversively, this new-found strength, this liberation from her body's inadvertent manifestations of its own weakness, is attained at the point where she is about to be liberated from her husband's control:

> Cecilia knew that Digby was going to die, but a strange thing had happened. With the knowledge came also a wonderful and almost unnatural power. She was not inclined to faint, she did not cry, she did not moan ... 'That nervousness which he so dreaded shall not worry him. All those hysterical feelings which he has begged of me to conquer shall not appear. I will show him that I have learned ... the lesson which his presence and training ... have given me.' (vol.2 pp.186-7)

The potentially subversive implications are negated by a delineation of the dangerous consequences of her attempted repression of 'femininity', signified in her cure from consumption. Cecilia's 'taint', which marked her as both consumptive and as woman, was only controllable when it was overtly signified in bodily manifestations and protected within marriage. The necessity of male control over 'diseased' femaleness is made explicit after her husband's death when Cecilia proceeds to reject her prescribed female sphere and to appropriate the 'masculine' role of healer. She pursues a course of action which apparently transforms her from consumptive patient, diagnosed by her husband as weak and over-emotional, into

---

54 Cecilia's disobedience as a nurse is given as another reason for her unsuitability. She forgets 'the voice of command to obey the voice of suffering' (vol.1 p.22). This also prefigures her disobedience after her husband's death.

55 See Sontag, *op.cit.*, pp. 19-20, 24, 25.

curer of consumption, diagnoser, prescriber and vanquisher of suffering. Her first subversive act is to test her husband's incomplete cure for T.B. on her own consumptive body. The text, once more, insistently notes her control over her feelings. As Cecilia reads Digby's papers for the first time, her nerves and fear are set aside and '[e]motion was held in abeyance' (vol.3 p.20). After she has experimented successfully on herself she notes that she is 'calmer of nerve, less passionate, than of old. You see what a cold-blooded monster I must be' (vol.3 pp.92-3). Once Cecilia transforms herself from consumptive sufferer into medicine lady she represses emotion and promotes the intellect, telling Dorothy's mother, for example, that '[i]n a moment like this we must both keep calm, we must subdue our feelings and bring our intellects to bear on the decision which lies before us' (vol.3 p.98). Now, in stark contrast to her earlier nursing days, Cecilia administers the cure to Dorothy and 'made the calmest, coolest, most admirable nurse' (vol.3 p.109). Ominously, later in the text, we are told that when she administers the cure to patients she becomes 'intensely calm and quiet' (vol.3 p.206). The excessive feelings and nerves which once named her consumptive were also diagnosed by her husband as emanating from a lack of spiritual discipline. Once freed from the disease which restrained her by its inadvertent manifestation of her spiritual instability, her innate immorality is unleashed. Literally freed of the physical 'taint', she is also freed from the excessive feelings which exposed both her physical and spiritual instability.

The further Cecilia infiltrates the male medical profession, the more self-controlled and self-confident she becomes and the more she loses her sense of morality. Male physicians prescribe medicine, 'Cecilia throws them away', (vol.3 p.131) male physicians pronounce patients incurable 'and Cecilia cures them' (vol.3 p.131). As her reputation spreads, the medicine lady becomes convinced of her ability to rationalise, to be autonomous, to diagnose. Explaining why she continues to use the cure when it sometimes fails she states: 'Has a medical man, with full diplomas from schools of surgeons and medicine, never made a mistake? He uses his favourite drug - it saves in one case, in another it only increases the mischief. He goes on, he still believes in the medicine.' (Vol.3 p.149) On one level the text positions the reader to agree with Cecilia's defence of herself. Her use of the incomplete cure amongst the poor is often successful and her failed cases are typically those who are in the advanced stages of the disease and who have little chance of survival anyway. However, the horrified response to her practise of medicine from the male medical profession indicates that it is her unstable

womanhood which makes her appropriation of the cure so dangerous. Ultimately male diagnoses prevail over Cecilia's.

The power Cecilia attains after her husband's death and her cure from consumption is written in the text as deriving from an immoral and irrational nature no longer protected and controlled by either the rational male or the taint of consumption which overtly proclaimed her diseased body 'feminine'. Once her spiritual guide has been ejected from the text, alongside the physical illness which denoted the need for that guide, Cecilia's unstable womanhood consumes herself and threatens to consume society. Her apparent control over her mind and body is written as an unnatural aping of 'masculinity' which cannot be retained indefinitely because it does not derive from a moral, spiritual or intellectual strength. The text has already intimated that the 'ideal' doctor should strive for the salvation of the soul. Instead, Cecilia makes the cure of the body the priority. Further, it is made explicit that she deliberately refuses to attend to the promptings of her own conscience.

As Cecilia increasingly represses her once excessive feelings, she increasingly represses her sense of morality. Having broken her promise to her husband she declares 'I don't repent, I mean to break it again' (vol.3 p.92). Despite her self-acknowledged separation from God she persists in a belief in her superior morality: ' "There is a gulf between my husband and me," she said. "He is in heaven and I am on earth. I cannot pray, and yet, am I doing wrong?" ' (vol.3 p.102) She concludes that she is not. Cecilia's lack of morality is accompanied by a lack of intellect. Her decision to disobey her husband is not, as she intimates, based on rational objectives but on medical ignorance and the emotive desire to save her friend's bodily life. She refuses to perceive the incomplete nature of the cure, to her 'the whole idea seemed perfect and ready for use' (vol.3 p.25). Later, her medical ignorance becomes 'a serious stumbling-block' (vol.3 p.188). Cecilia is thus unsuccessful as a 'Lady Doctor' because she lacks an understanding of both the moral and intellectual responsibilities of the physician.

The importance of genuine (read male!) medical expertise and of a doctor's moral rectitude are foregrounded from the start of the text by its inscription of Digby as the 'ideal' doctor. By the close of the text it is clear that his refusal to experiment with the imperfect cure derived from his scientific and spiritual insight. Nonetheless, Cecilia does have some success with the cure and this generates a degree of ambivalence in the text. Notably, Dr Crichton is torn between his horror at her 'murder' of her child, and his gratitude for her salvation of Dorothy's (his wife) mortal

body. Further, as Cecilia herself notes, had she been a qualified male practitioner, the reaction to her experimentation would have been altogether different:

> 'Dr. Phillips, you earnestly desired to obtain possession of my husband's discovery. Had I given it you, you would have been the guilty person instead of me; you would have used the medicine to bring fame to yourself and killed many people with it. It would not have mattered in your case, for you are one of those licensed to kill. As for me - .' (vol.3 p.232)

The ambivalence generated by these factors is suppressed in the narrative as it proceeds to reaffirm the 'innate' difference between women and men through reconstructing the instability of the 'diseased' female body. This is most forcibly inscribed in the final fate of the medicine lady. Cecilia is heavily punished for her transgressions. Her first punishment is retribution for exiting the domestic sphere and neglecting her prescribed role as mother: her daughter fails to respond to the incomplete cure Cecilia has administered to her and succumbs to tubercular meningitis. The second punishment is more interesting: the text closes with a reinscription of Cecilia's body as consumptive.

As noted above, Cecilia's progression in the text is a miswritten path for the female consumptive body. Cecilia has apparently overcome the limitations of her diseased 'feminine' body through appropriating her husband's cure. However, as was also suggested above, T.B. was typically seen to afflict those whose excessive emotions/passions were repressed and then inadvertently manifested in physical disease. It is clear now why the majority of consumptive bodies in the text are female: 'femininity' itself was linked to excessive emotion in the period. From the moment Cecilia cures herself of the taint of consumption she forcibly attempts to repress emotion; that is, she attempts to repress the signifier of her 'femininity', in an attempt to appropriate 'masculinity'. The close of the text reinscribes her body as an overt site of consumptive instability in an exaggerated unleashing of her repressed feelings. Stoned by the poor she tried to help, the blood which runs down her face acts as a sudden visible sign of the consumptive state of her body.[56] At this moment she is consumed by insanity, losing all control over herself. Her diseased 'femininity' is once again literally written onto her body. Just prior to this she has finally realised that her moral corruption is linked to her sex: '*God has cursed me.* His curse is so dreadful. He does not wish me to use the cure. He says

56 See *ibid.*, pp.12-14 for a discussion of the physical manifestations of the disease.

it is too mighty for me. I have stolen it from scientific men. I am an ignorant woman, and I must not try it any more. God has taught me this' (vol.1 p.252).

3.3 The Neutered 'Lady Doctor'

In *Dr Edith Romney* and *The Medicine Lady*, although more markedly in the latter, the female body itself becomes the inadvertent signifier of the 'Lady Doctor's ' doomed attempt to infiltrate a male arena. In both cases, the innate 'feminine' qualities of the characters, which preclude their success, are manifested in a physical and mental collapse: Edith and Cecilia cannot overcome their 'feminine' natures. A similar attempt to denote the female body itself as a signifier of the danger of negating gender difference can be seen in discourse which inscribed the 'Lady Doctor', as the 'Girton Girl' was also inscribed, as unsexed and/or neutered as a consequence of her 'unnatural' training. As was shown in chapter 2, some argued that the inappropriate education of woman would impair her bodily functions, destroy her faith and/or transform her into a hybrid man. However, permitting women access to a medical training was perceived to be much more dangerous than allowing them access to a general higher education. The knowledge imparted to medical students was of necessity anatomical and it was asserted that anatomical knowledge was more apt to effect the masculinisation of women than any other form of learning. The site in which the naked body was exposed to women medical students, the dissecting-room, became a signifying site of all the unnameable horrors effected in those women intent on attaining anatomical knowledge. It was claimed that the dissecting-room was a breeding ground for female immorality and entrance to it could not fail to transpose any 'feminine' woman into an immodest and indelicate creature, henceforward lost to innocence. The idea of women being exposed to such corrupting influences generated horror: 'In the anatomical theatre must the foundations of medical or surgical knowledge be laid. In the dead-house must the truth of diagnosis be confirmed, and the teaching of vital symptoms be tested. Are women to be subjected to this ordeal?'[57]

Women who refused to accept that loss of delicacy was inevitable when attaining anatomical knowledge were perceived as living proof that the feared masculinisation and unsexing had occurred. More horrific even than mere loss of their 'feminine' modesty, was the fear that such women had lost all awareness of the essence of their womanliness; and had been transformed *by their own perverse*

57 Anon., 'Admission of Women to Academical Degrees', *The Lancet*, 2, (24/10/1863), 486.

desires into voracious hybrid creatures. An anonymous writer in the *Saturday Review* in 1871, for example, claims of women medical students that 'they have unsexed themselves, and trampled under foot [sic] most of the qualities which have hitherto been their glory ... they take up a foul question, which, before their handling, even men discussed among themselves with a certain reserve'.[58] Clearly, such obsessions with the unsexing of medical women derived from an anxiety that gender roles were indeed not fixed; that women could re-position themselves in alternative modes to the way in which they were inscribed by male hegemony. It is also clear that the disgusted reaction to the women's demands derived from an awareness that in confronting 'horrors' from which they had hitherto been protected, they would simultaneously be gaining a knowledge of the fe/male body. Access to anatomical knowledge potentially gave women the opportunity to prescribe for the female body: this was an inversion of the notion that the unstable female body required controlling by men.[59]

Most condemned of all were the mixed classes attended by women medical students and their unabashed desire to gain qualifications despite the fact that this would result in their meeting with men in the presence of the naked body. Accused of thinking 'it no shame for young men and women to study anatomy and physiology together, to dissect dead bodies in concert, to listen to lectures on obstetrics and kindred subjects, sitting side by side on the same benches',[60] the determination of the women to gain their qualifications in spite of the admonitions of leading doctors was perceived to be a premeditated attempt to reject their 'feminine' nature and a deliberately perverse denial of the immodest nature of their conduct:

> it appears that girls are to associate with boys as students, in order that when they become women they may be able to speak to men with entire frankness upon all the subjects of a doctor's daily practice. In plain words, the lady aspirants to medicine and surgery desire to rid themselves speedily and effectually of that modesty which nature planted in them ... We beg to suggest that there are other places besides dissecting-rooms and hospitals where these ladies may relieve themselves of the modesty which they find so troublesome.[61]

---

58 Anon., 'The Sacred Sex', *Saturday Review*, 31, (13/5/1871), 596.

59 For a discussion of some of the ways in which women doctors redefined female ill-health see chapter 5, pp.201-4 below.

60 Anon., 'The Sacred Sex', *op.cit.*, 596.

61 Anon., 'The Irrepressible Woman', *Saturday Review*, 30, (26/11/1870), 683

A reference to the dissecting-room became a shorthand means of indicating the adverse effects to be expected when women rejected their traditional sphere and entered medical college. By merely pointing to the horrors of the dissecting-room and its anatomical 'delights', and implying therein the immodesty of a desire to enter its doors, a writer was able to ignore other arguments for and against medical training for women:

> It is not that the arguments against women undertaking medical practice are overwhelmingly strong ... but that there is something in the nature of the idea which ... leads to the display of antipathetic feeling ... many of the most estimable members of our profession perceive in the medical education and destination of women a horrible and vicious attempt of women to deliberately unsex themselves - in the acquisition of anatomical and physiological knowledge, the gratification of morbid curiosity and thrust after forbidden information.[62]

The 'fact' that the dissecting-room perverted a woman's delicacy was 'proved' by accounts of the physical degeneration of the 'Lady Doctor' who, like the 'Girton Girl', was often caricatured as an ugly, unwomanly and degenerate figure, physically repulsive to healthy men! An 'English Physician', for example, writing to the *New York Herald* categorises women doctors thus:

> There are two types of female doctors - one tall, thin, very shortsighted, who never appears to do anything but pore into great volumes and who when perambulating always has half a dozen big books under her arm; the other stout and red-faced, who smokes cigars, and in every way apes men.[63]

Such caricatures of the deformed 'Lady Doctor', like those of the 'Girton Girl', were an expression of prevalent fears that the erosion of gendered roles was resulting in the devolution of the race. The masculinisation of women and its purported corollary, the feminisation of men, were seen as a threat to the future of humanity. Arabella Kenealy, one of the first women to train as a doctor at the London School of Medicine for Women, was specifically interested in this perceived link between gender roles and the advancement or regression of the human species. Both her fiction and non-fiction analyse 'femininity', 'masculinity' and, her

---

62 Rivington, *op. cit.*, pp.135-6.

63 'An English Physician', 'Letter to the Editor', *New York Herald*, (12/10/1890), Press Cuttings Book 22, the archives of the Royal Free Hospital.

favourite construct, the 'neuter', in relation to both the medical profession and woman's general role in society. An article by Kenealy in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, and a much later work entitled *Feminism and Sex Extinction*, both outlined her fears for the future of the human race. Whilst criticising women who reject conventional constructions of 'femininity', Kenealy also asserted the existence of 'masculine' qualities lying latent in all women. She did not deny a female ability to succeed in formerly 'masculine' spheres. However, latent 'masculinity', claims Kenealy, is best ignored:

> Do not let her be persuaded that her duty to her sex lies in the cultivation of her potential masculinity, let her turn this always to the perfecting of her womanhood: so best will she establish the honour of her kind and do her utmost for humanity. The fact of a power latent is no argument for its development.[64]

The end result of the masculinisation of women and a corresponding feminisation of men is perceived, by Kenealy, to be the degeneration of the race into one of unhealthy weaklings, and the obliteration of sexual desire: 'Mannish women and womanish men are alike incapable of experiencing and inspiring the love-passion which charms and transfigures life for true man and true woman'.[65] Kenealy's theories were problematic to the writer herself for if women were not to develop their latent 'masculinity' by following male paths how could the appropriateness of her own choice of career be justified? The woman doctor could herself be contributing to the degeneration of the species. Kenealy avoids this conclusion by asserting that women are 'born physicians' whose role 'it is to mother, befriend and inspire humanity at large ... [w]hose part it is ... to extend the tender purifying ethics of Woman and The Home even further and more deeply into public life, public work, and public administration'.[66]

Kenealy's novel *Dr Janet of Harley Street* (1893) fictionalises the dichotomous nature of her 'scientific' writing which repeatedly condemns the changing role of women in society while attempting to justify medicine as a career for women. The doctor of the title is the epitome of Kenealy's version of the woman healer outlined above: Dr Janet Doyle serves the community through her maternal instinct and womanly philanthropy. Importantly, however, Dr Janet is also the

---

64 Kenealy, 'The Worship of Masculinity', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 265, (10/1888), 358.

65 Kenealy, *Feminism and Sex Extinction*, London 1920, pp.26-7.

66 *ibid.*, p.74.

epitome of the caricatured, neutered 'Lady Doctor', unsexed by her medical training. Wearing divided skirts, a bodice like a man's shooting jacket, uninterested in her unwomanly body with its massive hands and forehead, broad chin, and dark skin, Dr Janet is 'a middle-aged genial-looking woman, of a height and figure whose ample proportions she made no effort to disguise by dress'.[67] Her character reflects this masculinised bodily appearance. Assertive and forthright with a 'firm and fiery will' (p.87), she herself claims that she is the embodiment of masculinity: 'there is not a man in the room as muscular, rational and energetic - in a word, what you call masculine - as I' (p.124). Doyle has reached the acme of her profession through rejecting all conventional female aspirations. An unsubmissive spinster with physical and mental strength, she is Dean of the Medical School for Women, Senior Physician at the Minerva Women's Hospital and lecturer at various medical colleges. Respected by patients both poor and rich she refuses to compromise her beliefs: 'her social ethics were inherently radical. She gave precedence to none ... it became rather a fashion to proclaim oneself a patient of the eccentric and popular doctor' (p.96).

Despite the construction of Dr Janet as the epitome of unwomanliness in both appearance and character, she is not condemned in the narrative. She signifies the potential inherent in women to attain status in a 'male' sphere. In accordance with the author's acknowledgment that the disproportionate number of women to men precludes every female from fulfilling her womanliness in the marital sphere, Doyle has renounced or been deprived of heterosexual desire and has transposed her maternal qualities into the public domain.[68] Yet, despite her usefulness in befriending and inspiring humanity through her medical skill and philanthropy, the text does not deny that Doyle runs counter to the traditional role prescribed for women. Instead, as a masculinised woman she serves to remind the reader of the potentially degenerative effects of devolution caused by an apparent negation of gender difference. Moreover, the text justifies its non-judgmental portrait of the neutered 'Lady Doctor' only by making Dr Janet herself the defender and protector of genuine womanliness and manliness. This effectively transforms the novel from a potentially challenging exploration of cultural constructions of gender into a text which reaffirms mainstream inscriptions of appropriate female activities.

---

67 Kenealy, *Dr Janet of Harley Street*, London 1893, p.86. All further quotations are from this edition and will be referred to in the main text by page number.

68 See Kenealy, 'A New View of the Surplus of Women', *Westminster Review*, 136, (11/1891), 465-475. For a discussion about some women's 'failure' to get married see chapter 5, pp.177-9 below.

According to Doyle's pronouncements in the narrative, the progression of humanity, as opposed to its regression, is dependent on sexual differentiation. The more alike women and men are the 'lower we are in the scale of evolution' (p.124). The perfect development of men and women is possible, Doyle claims, only in those who are 'of distinct sex in all [their] attributes' (p.125). That is, those who are womanly and manly effect the progression of the race. Doyle's contention is that in current society, appropriate definitions of womanliness and manliness have been overwritten by an emphasis on 'femininity' and 'masculinity' which are terms, she claims, which actually promote qualities which lead to the degeneration of humanity. Thus, 'femininity' has become a term which demands that women be physically unhealthy: modern women, 'with their slim forms and little heads, are distinctly *feminine*; but feminine is a kind of spurious womanliness, a sort of degeneration which is no more womanliness than feebleness of mind is refinement of brain' (p.125). Moreover, Doyle complains, definitions of 'masculinity' have led men to 'weaken and warp [their] minds by stupid mental acrobatics' (p.126) and to damage their bodies 'by preposterous, prolonged athletics' (p.126). The consequence of 'such unnatural exhaustion and mental distortion is rapid degeneration of the race' (p.126). It is these 'artificial modes of life and thought' (p.126) argues Doyle, which 'cause devolution and the production of neuters' (p.126). The apparent radicality of a stance which acknowledges that the terms 'femininity' and 'masculinity' are cultural is thus quickly negated by both Doyle's warnings against the neutering of the race and by her definitions of genuine womanliness and manliness. To be womanly is to have a:

> 'tender heart, gentle tongue, soft hand, tactful loving mind, strong sweet patience, purity, sensitive honour, and all the lovable, adorable, worshipful, womanly virtues ... How many women now-a-days have any of the instincts for home, and wife, and motherhood, which are the crown of their lovely sex? No! believe me, those of us who are not distinctly masculine are feminine, but very few are womanly.' (p.125)

Doyle's pronouncements concerning women, men and the neuter, occur within a narrative which self-consciously tests their validity through rewriting the Genesis story of creation and original sin. The text appropriates biblical referents from Genesis which have a commonly accepted meaning in paradigms of female culpability and gender hierarchies. Ultimately, the thinly veiled allegory both reinforces the significations of femaleness in the original myth and denounces the nineteenth-century advent of 'Lady Doctors': Dr Janet's attempts to define and

redefine wo/manliness through experimentation on her protégée, Phyllis Eve, lead to a reaffirmation of the validity of the archetypal constructions of femaleness and maleness written into the biblical creation story.

There are two versions of the creation of humanity in Genesis. In the first, God creates Man and Woman in his own image, blesses them, and instructs them to '[b]e fruitful and multiply'.[69] It is only in the second version that Woman's lesser status to Man and her culpability in the fall are privileged. Here, God creates Man, places him in the Garden of Eden and subsequently creates Woman from one of his ribs. It is in this version that Woman eats of the tree of knowledge and persuades Man to do likewise, with the consequence that they are both ejected from the garden. Importantly, it is also in this second myth that Man is given the power of naming: 'the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name'.[70] Adrienne Munich points out that, significantly, this power of language is claimed by Man before Woman is created, and that 'Adam's acts of naming dramatize a male will to power and a willing of female absence'.[71] She goes on to note that it is only when Man is presented with a female to name that he explains the reasoning underlying it: 'This last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.'[72] The connotations of Man's role as namer of Woman in Genesis are clearly related to control over the signifying power of language as a means of male control over women. Importantly, as Munich notes, the naming of Woman is in itself a metalepsis:

> Usually the first namer is female. Mothers convey names to children; the metalepsis [in Genesis] suggests that their nearly absolute pedagogic control over the years of infancy, when people learn words, threatens male dominance ... As an extreme effort to obliterate any female role in shaping language, the fable's reversal detaches woman from her function.[73]

---

69 Genesis, 1:28.

70 Genesis, 2:18-23.

71 Adrienne Munich, 'Notorious Signs, Feminist Criticism and Literary Tradition', in Gayle Greene and Coppélia Khan (eds), *Making A Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism*, London 1991[first published 1985], p.239.

72 Genesis, 2:23-4.

73 Munich, in *op.cit.*, p.241.

One of the most interesting elements of *Dr Janet of Harley Street* is its apparent re-reversal of the metalepsis in the original story. Doyle is constructed as a character who attempts to appropriate the role of namer given to Adam in Genesis. Appropriately, this marks the neutered, masculinised 'Lady Doctor' as Adamic. Dr Janet's attempt to experiment with the signifying power of language, first seen in her renaming of Phyllis Eve as Phyllis Adam, initially appears to be a subversion of the meanings inherent in the original story. However, her failure to transform 'Eve' into 'Adam', other than by name, conveniently serves to uphold her own theories about the importance of sexual differentiation.

Phyllis Eve is first seen in an implied Eden, picking flowers in the garden. Unlike her biblical counterpart, she is apparently no scheming sexual seductress representing a threat to male morality. Her sexuality is not denied but presented in terms of purity and innocence: 'she showed signs of that feminine subtlety - that nameless charm of mysterious and latent passion without which the most physically perfect woman fails to be attractive' (p.6). Her sin is not that of passion but of social aspiration. Beguiled by a rich and apparently fatherly suitor, and manipulated by her mother, at 17 she is to marry a man of 60. A typical example of Victorian innocence, she is horrified to discover that the serpent in the garden is none other than her fiancé. Exposed for the first time to the terrifying nature of male sexuality in the form of the sadistic Marquis de Richeville with his 'coarse, crude passion' (p.8) she marries him '[w]ith a submission born of exhaustion and despair' (p.18), only to flee a post-lapsarian Eden to escape the horrors of her wedding night. Rescued by Dr Janet, she is renamed Phyllis Adam because 'Adam is the last person in the world the Old Serpent will be looking for' (p.112). Doyle then persuades Phyllis Adam to embark on a medical career and 'as Dr Janet had set her heart on outwitting the foe by transforming Eve into Adam - in more ways than one, some opponents of women's medical rights may growl - she [Phyllis] meekly acquiesced' (p.113). The point at which Phyllis changes from 'Eve' to 'Adam' in name thus also denotes her entrance into a 'male' sphere.

Phyllis Eve/Adam is Doyle's experiment in assessing the validity of her own assertions concerning the neutering of women through their engagement in 'manly' activities. Despite her renaming of Phyllis, Doyle has no desire to turn 'Eve' into 'Adam' by transforming Phyllis into a masculinised woman. Despite her own neutered status, and despite her belief that neutered women make the best

workers, Doyle has a voracious antipathy to the neutered woman.[74] She hopes that Phyllis can train as a doctor and become her colleague while still retaining her womanliness. Doyle hopes to prove that the signifier 'Adam', which denoted Phyllis's movement into a 'male' sphere, need not result in the further signification of Phyllis Adam as masculinised neuter. Dr Janet is herself ambivalent about this, for she suggests that once Phyllis begins 'male' study a parallel masculinisation of her physical appearance will occur: 'Close study takes the iron out of the blood, and spoils her complexion; cramming her brain thins and fades her hair; stooping for ever over books, ruins her figure; so that by the time you were qualified, you might put in quite a presentable professional appearance.' (p.99) She then laughingly proclaims her statements to be only 'half-true' (p.99).

In fact, Phyllis is never in any real danger of becoming a neuter. She cannot fully enter the 'male' medical arena; cannot be transformed from 'Eve' into 'Adam' other than by name. Significantly, the most forceful intimation that Doyle's experiment upon Phyllis will prove her inherent womanliness, and therefore her inability to devote herself to 'manly' work, is given in a delineation of her reaction to the dissecting-room. In *Dr Janet of Harley Street* the dissecting-room does not impair woman's modesty. Nonetheless, it serves, as it does for the writers in the periodicals quoted above, as a means of debating genuine womanliness. Phyllis reacts to the dissecting-room not with scientific interest and rationale but with emotion. From her female perspective she cannot disassociate bodily organs as objects of study from the human individual to whom they belonged nor can she overcome her sense that dissection of the body is an affront on the power of God, the creator. Her latent 'masculinity' can be developed to enable her to enter the doors of the dissecting-room but once within she cannot override her innate female perspective:

> What could she learn of the mighty processes of human life by severing the senseless, rigid limbs ... How much could she comprehend of the attributes and strange complexities of nervous tissues by dissecting out its silken threads? Would the springs of human thought and impulse leap out at the touch of her knife amid the brain-cells?... Phyllis never overcame her distaste for the dissecting-room; she never learnt to make 'charming dissections' of the arterial and nervous systems of her dead fellows, nor lost, in scientific fervour, her sense that the dead heart and eyes

74 See, for example, pp. 134-6.

> and limbs were human things and had administered to the needs and wishes of the human soul. (pp.130,131-2)

Phyllis's lack of scientific rationale is detected by Doyle's colleagues who comment to Dr Janet: 'She will never make a doctor... she will never think as men do and be essentially scientific.' (p.133) Dr Janet is unworried, for Phyllis's reaction to her medical training merely upholds Doyle's own theories on gender difference: 'I do not wish her to think as men think, else what is the use of nature having specialised her faculties? Why, the very reason nature makes us different, is that we may bring to bear upon her problems totally different processes and modes of thought' (p.133). Yet, despite Doyle's optimistic reading of Phyllis's nature, her appropriate 'difference' makes her an unsuitable 'Lady Doctor'. Although she often finds her study interesting, when she stops working 'other feelings come with a rush and make study hard' (p.171). Unlike Dr Janet, Phyllis does not possess the 'natural instincts of a student' (p.107) and 'she many times looked back with wistful eyes to the old days ... harking back to the babbling, splashing laughter of the brook that ran beside her old home' (p.107). Phyllis's real desire is not to become a 'Lady Doctor' but to return to the pre-lapsarian edenic garden where she was 'Eve' not 'Adam'.

The text intimates that Phyllis's natural proclivity is for love and marriage. It does this not by exposing her inability to train as a doctor but by affirming that all along she has been a daughter of Eve, not a daughter of Adam. Ironically, so intent is Doyle on proving that Phyllis can be 'Adam' in name while remaining 'Eve' in nature, that she overlooks an important element of the biblical story - the culpability of Eve. Phyllis's edenic fall into knowledge precludes her return to her pre-lapsarian innocence. Moreover, the very fact that she has not been neutered by her training makes her an object of desire; makes her sexually tempting; and further names her a daughter of Eve. The problems inherent in Doyle's experiment now become clear. If Doyle manages to retain the womanliness of 'heart and mind' (p.145) which she perceives in her protégée, then Phyllis will not be fulfilled by a medical career for she will want love, marriage and children. However, as an already married but still sexually innocent woman, her body as a site of desire is forbidden. If, however, Phyllis is neutered she will lose her beauty and will cease to be a temptress.[75]

---

75 The use of the name 'Eve' to imply that Phyllis is a temptress is intensified by the use of the name 'Phyllis': the latter is a synonym of 'Campapse', a mythical figure seen as a seductress and often depicted riding on the back of Aristotle to demonstrate the way in which women dominate men.

Doyle comes to the wry conclusion that 'Phyl, you'll have to become a neuter, I'm afraid. It's your only chance' (p.145). Once Dr Janet realises that she has lost her protégée to Paul Lieving she finally admits that womanliness and medicine do not go together: 'The next girl I select for my partnership shall be a plain, certain-aged, spectacled neuter.' (p.264) Only the female neuter - already written into the text as a cause of degeneration - can become a safe 'Lady Doctor'.

Phyllis is the antithesis of 'a plain ... spectacled neuter' (p.264), and although she wishes to please her mentor by studying medicine, she is 'naturally' 'made for love and home and children. She isn't meant for skeletons and pharmacopoeias' (p.143). Importantly, it is Paul Lieving, the 'ideal' manly man who contests Doyle's attempt to write Phyllis as a 'Lady Doctor'. Paul's reading of Phyllis's ambitions for marriage are proved valid. However, before she is accorded her role as his wife, the text denotes the rightness of the latter by delineating two alternatives to this appropriate ending: an alliance with the degenerative male, de Richeville; and an alliance with the degenerative female, Dr Janet. Importantly, Phyllis's body is an unacceptable site of desire for both these characters and alliance with either of them would signify the devolution of the race.

The Marquis is positioned as a sadistic and perverted dissolute, whose sexual proclivities are linked with control, power and pain. Attempting to track Phyllis down after she flees to London, he takes pleasure in imagining her whipped by a public authority as punishment for her audacity in running away from him. Later in the text when he strikes Phyllis on the mouth, her shame at his assault marks it as a displaced sexual attack. The Marquis whom she has fondly imagined to be like benevolent aristocrats she has read of in French books is obviously to be read as a version of the rather more well-known French marquis, de Sade. Phyllis's alliance with him may give him legal rights over her body but his dissolute behaviour denotes him an unsuitable partner for the womanly woman: he is a degenerate product of the age.[76]

For much of the text, Phyllis's alignment with Dr Janet provides her with an alternative pathway to marital relations with de Richeville. However, this rejection of

---

76 The Marquis' attempts to force Phyllis to live with him through recourse to the law provide the text with an opportunity to denounce the unfairness of a legal system which denies women the right to choose not to live with their husbands. See Swenson, *Treating a Sick Culture: Victorian Fictions of Medical Women*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa 1995, for an interesting discussion of the text's polemic against Victorian marital laws.

marriage in favour of medicine places Phyllis in another unsuitable alliance. Doyle has intended Phyllis to be her partner in the medical practice. This in itself is inappropriate for, as Paul perceives, Phyllis is made for marriage not the dissecting-room. Further, the text offers the implicit suggestion that Doyle's desire for a partner is more than just a desire for a professional partner: albeit in an elliptical fashion, the text constructs Phyllis as an 'improper' object of desire for the 'Lady Doctor'. While Dr Janet's appearance and behaviour suggest that she is an unsexed, masculinised neuter, her lack of heterosexual desire is juxtaposed with implicit suggestions of her attraction to Phyllis's beauty. On discovering that Paul desires Phyllis, Doyle becomes angry, saying ' "I will not have her interfered with ... I warn you" - a quick anger filled her face and voice, - "Paul, I warn you to let her alone. I won't have you make love to her - I won't have any man make love to her. I want her for myself" ' (p.142). Later, on the day Phyllis and Paul get married, Dr Janet is reduced to tears for the first time in ten years! The text displaces this implicit, unacceptable desire by according the 'Lady Doctor', who herself signifies female degeneration, the role of protector of the appropriately heterosexual and gendered future: it is Dr Janet who enables the union of the 'manly' man and 'womanly' woman to prosper. However, before Phyllis can be accorded her rightful role as Paul's wife, the text punishes her for both her marriage with de Richeville, and her entrance into the dissecting-room.

The union between Paul and Phyllis ultimately allows for a progressive, rather than degenerative, future for the race. Initially, their marriage appears to offer a sublimation of the hierarchical construction of gender written into the Genesis version of the fall: Phyllis is now neither 'Adam' nor 'Eve' but an apparently non-gendered Lieving. However, neutrality in the form of 'Life' rather than polarity as 'Adam' or 'Eve' is not an option which the text admits as valid. Phyllis's, albeit inadvertent, position as sexual temptress names her a daughter of Eve. Her alignment with Liveing becomes a means of exposing her inherent difference to Adam and of emphasising the superficiality of her temporary Adamic status. By marrying Paul she takes his name. Doyle has lost her power over language, and thus her power to define women. Moreover, in the Genesis story, Adam having named his companion 'Woman', confers on her the name 'Eve' only after her corruption and God's punishment of her. The Hebrew 'Eve', translates as Life or

Living, the mother of all living.[77] Thus, states Munich, woman's creative power to reproduce is acknowledged only when it becomes associated with 'sin, pain and death' and only in the context of a story which denotes woman as created from man.[78] The Genesis story thus defines Man as the primary source of female life: 'By turning the normal sequence around and having her arrive second, Eve becomes second-best, subordinate - as child to parent.'[79] Phyllis's acquisition of Paul's name both returns her to her original name 'Eve' and implicitly, given the Biblical connotations of this name, both affirms Man as the original giver of life and denotes her inherited punishment: indeed, Phyllis does reproduce in pain and sin, almost dies and loses her baby.

The text's play with biblical referents is widened when Phyllis's unintentional sin (bigamy) is considered. Tricked by the Marquis into believing he is dead, she marries Liveing. The revelation of this trick serves to remind us that Phyllis's progression from Eve to Adam to Liveing has all along been a false one. Phyllis is married and her name is Phyllis de Richeville. In fact, Phyllis has been aligned with evil throughout the text. Doyle's apparent appropriation of the power of naming has always been illusory: Phyllis is legally married and the signifying power of names has always been in the hands of the, albeit degenerate, male. Moreover, Phyllis compounds this link between herself and evil in her desire to continue marital relations with Paul when they discover their marriage is bigamous. However, typically, in a text which has confused itself in its own attempts to define womanliness and female culpability, the transferral of power back to the appropriately 'masculine' is possible only through the instigations of the text's unsexed neuter. It is Doyle who acts as redeemer and who provides a hope for the future of the race in the form of the 'manly' Paul and 'womanly' Phyllis. Her initiative also works to diffuse the potentially degenerative effects of her own lack of heterosexual desire and her neutered status.

According to her own pronouncements, Doyle is participating in the devolution of the race by following a medical career rather than a domestic one. Yet it is only through her scientific expertise that she can warn her contemporaries of

---

77 The etymology of the Hebrew 'Eve' is commonly accepted to be 'Havvan' - life or living. A second school of thought, now largely disregarded, translates 'Eve' as 'Serpent'. See F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone (eds), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Oxford 1997, [third edition], p.582.

78 Munich, in *op.cit.*, p.241.

79 *ibid.*

the precarious evolutionary state of humanity. Her unconventional career is thus used to uphold convention. Paul and Phyllis are the embodiments of Doyle's ideal 'womanly' woman and 'manly' man. In order for the text's closure to assert the possibility of properly gendered sexual relations, the sadistic villain must be ejected. Dr Janet persuades de Richeville, now degenerated by his profligate lifestyle, to commit suicide. The text then closes with an affirmation that even Dr Janet, despite her physical, neutered appearance and her profession, is at heart a woman with womanly emotions: ' "I am a wicked woman", she said, "But I thank God he did it." Saying which, two tears rolled out of her dark, fine eyes and fell upon her large hands!' (p.340) In *Dr Janet of Harley Street* despite the dire warnings given by the prototype of that horrific creature, the neuter, the construction of gender in terms of difference is inescapable. Eve remains Eve, Adam remains Adam, the devil can be temporarily defeated, and even the neuter will exhibit a womanly nature, a condition which cannot be fully sublimated even by a medical training. In this text then, the neutered 'Lady Doctor', Dr Janet, is accepted only because her body itself is an explicit signification of the degenerative effects produced when women ape men, and because she uses her position to affirm the appropriate sphere for woman as home and hearth and husband.

3.4 Summary

The 'Lady Doctor' texts discussed in this chapter all make a link between the study and practice of medicine by women and the female body. Dr Edith Romney is not denied her womanliness but she is taught that her aspirations to a medical career are inappropriate aspirations to 'male' individuality. Her mental and bodily collapse relocate her body under the power of the male medical profession. Alternatively, Cecilia Digby is accorded originality but the text's distinction between male and female originality defines the latter as insanity and the former as genius. Dr Janet is the most ambivalent figure, for she is presented as a philanthropic and successful 'Lady Doctor'. However, by making Dr Janet herself the proponent of 'femininity' and by delineating the story of an unindividual, marriage-loving heroine, the text manages to warn against the dangers of neutered womanhood. In each text the study and practice of medicine by women has a negative physical and/or mental and/or moral corollary that denotes male to female difference. In chapter 4 the 'Lady Doctor' and 'Girton Girl' texts discussed permit their heroines access to medicine or higher education without punishing them. However, they retain acceptability only by their willingness to serve the male hegemony.

Chapter 4

Degrees of Acceptance: 'Lady Doctors' and 'Girton Girls' Helping Women, Helping Men

4.1 Delicacy and the 'Lady Doctor'

> It seems to us that women, above all, should be encouraged to the full use of whatever strength their maker has given them. Is it not essential to the virtue of society that they should be allowed the freest moral action, unfettered by ignorance, and unintimidated by authority? For if women were not weak, men could not be wicked; and if women were sound and faithful guides, men need never be ashamed of their influence, nor afraid of their power.[1]

The anonymous author of this passage, writing on 'delicate subjects', goes on to argue that women are better fitted to act as midwives than men, not only because of their 'tenderness' and 'patience' but also because 'man midwifery' is indecent.[2] Yet one of the main contentions of those opposed to the higher education of woman was that permitting her access to previously hidden knowledge would impair her grasp of decency. As was demonstrated in chapters 2 and 3, vehement warnings concerning the threat embodied by the over-educated woman sometimes constructed the female body itself as the signifying site of the diseased and dangerous nature of the 'Girton Girl's' and 'Lady Doctor's' unsuitable aspirations. In relation, specifically, to the 'Lady Doctor' attempts to prove the immoral and immodest nature of her ambitions particularly focused on the perversion of womanly purity purportedly effected by her entrance into the dissecting-room and her subsequent knowledge of anatomy. Yet, logically, as reformers like the writer above were quick to point out, if female delicacy was revoked through women associating with men as students, then was not female delicacy equally 'tarnished' when the female body itself became the site of male examination?

The demand for women doctors for the gentlewomen of Britain had great appeal to many people when it was also intimated that the attendance on women by male doctors was indecent, and, therefore, liable to cause not only distress in the pure-minded woman but also, in rare instances, death! A woman's right to be

---

1 Talley, *Men in Female-Attire; or, the Opinion of Eminent University Men and Scientific Women on Delicate Subjects*, London 1864, p.10.

2 *ibid.*, pp.33, 13.

attended by another woman when a man was accorded the same courtesy without question was validated by claims that a truly 'feminine' woman would shrink from confiding to a male doctor anything relating to diseases 'peculiar' to her sex: 'I am certain that women, from their shrinking to reveal fully to their medical attendant all the particulars of the malady, not unfrequently suffer secretly and greatly, from causes which a female physician could at once relieve and remove.' [3] Blackwell states that her decision to train as a doctor was motivated by the confidences of a woman friend: 'You are fond of study, have health and leisure; why not study medicine? If I could have been treated by a lady doctor, my worst sufferings would have been spared me.'[4] Similarly, Jex-Blake in a letter to *The Lancet* writes:

> Not long ago a gentleman, who was pleading the cause of medical women, was asked if *he* would like to be attended by one of them, and replied, most admirably, 'No! I should hate it! and *therefore* I feel bound to enable women also to escape the *necessity* of being attended by one of the opposite sex.' It is just because we believe that each sex ought to be able to secure the medical attendance of members of that sex that we claim medical education for women.[5]

The contention that women would confide more easily and fully to female doctors was supplemented by suggestions that some male doctors abused their position of power, irrevocably damaging the modesty of their women patients.[6] 'A Physician', for example, writing in *The English Woman's Journal*, comments, elliptically, on the 'exceptional cases' where male doctors 'have abused the confidence of their patients and done violence to female modesty and delicacy'.[7] It was often asserted that women attended on by male doctors were subject to examinations of an indelicate and harrowing nature; examinations requiring an 'openness' in women incompatible with the inhibited behaviour the genuinely 'feminine' woman was expected to display when confronted with anything relating to the body (read the sexual). Thus, attendance on women by male physicians could

---

3 'A Physician', 'Medical Education for Ladies', *The English Woman's Journal*, 5, (7/1860), 319.

4 Blackwell, *Pioneer Work in Opening the Medical Profession to Women: Autobiographical Sketches*, London 1895, p.27.

5 Jex-Blake, 'Medical Women', [Letter to the Editor], *The Lancet*, 2, (8/11/1873), 688.

6 The case of a doctor in Germany who disguised himself 'in *woman's attire* in order to witness a birth' is referred to in Talley, *op.cit.*, p.i.

7 'A Physician', *op.cit.*, 319.

itself be seen to contribute to the regression of womanhood so vehemently deplored in many periodicals of the time. Women, it was claimed by some, were becoming hardened to immodest circumstances:

> Few mothers of families cannot bear testimony to the tears a young girl frequently sheds, when called upon to place her infirmities for the first time before a medical man for his advice; and painful as those tears are to witness, they are scarcely less so than their absence when habit has destroyed the sensibility which first caused them to flow.[8]

The employment of these 'delicacy' arguments was a useful tool for the reformers, particularly in the early years of the campaign for women doctors. The word 'delicacy' carried weighty implications linked to modesty, propriety and a 'natural' female inhibition about the body.[9] Therefore, references to delicacy enabled the reformers to construct an acceptable version of the 'Lady Doctor': she validated her role by upholding ideals of modest womanliness which supported the transmission of patriarchal values.[10] The 'delicacy' arguments demonstrated that permitting a woman to train as a doctor did not result in a perversion of womanliness, but, rather, enabled other women *to be* modest women. By emphasising delicacy and modesty the reformers were clearly employing a terminology likely to appeal to the status quo. Whilst this appropriation of the reactionary for the service of the subversive could not escape male paradigms of the female body and character, it nonetheless enabled inscriptions of the 'acceptable' 'Lady Doctor'.

An early fictional construction of the latter in Annie Thomas's *New Grooves* (1871) indicates both the dull conformity of the 'delicacy' arguments and the more interesting contradictions arising from attempts to deny the radicality of the medical woman while validating her acceptable existence. Written before the fight by women to enter the medical profession had been won, and at a time when debate over the issue was at its most vociferous, *New Grooves* offers a blatant *cri de cœur* for the 'Lady Doctor' which rests entirely on arguments about female modesty. It is most interesting, however, in its play with contradictory definitions of 'delicacy'. In this text, the 'Lady Doctor', unlike her counterparts in the novels discussed in

---

8 Anon., 'Lady Doctors', *Victoria Magazine*, 3, (6/1864), 137.

9 For a fuller discussion of the alternative meanings of delicacy see pp.132-3 below.

10 For a discussion of more progressive ideas about the 'Lady Doctor' see chapter 5, pp.200-4, 212-14 below.

chapter 3, suffers no physical, mental, or spiritual ill-effects as a result of her training. Instead, opposition to her role derives from confusion over the nature of female delicacy. The text interweaves a medical plot with a love plot to demonstrate both the social benefits of appropriate female delicacy and the detrimental effects of inappropriate delicacy. In the medical plot, the exposure of the female body only to a female doctor indicates suitable and modest delicacy; in contrast, in the love plot, the sexual impropriety of the anti-heroine indicates unsuitable, immodest delicacy. The text's construction of 'delicacy' as both decency and impropriety is a play on the contradictory meanings carried by the word during the period.

The most common usage of the word 'delicacy' during the Victorian period was in relation to modesty and propriety: this is clearly what the reformers intended to imply when they employed it to argue in favour of women doctors. Further, in this usage 'delicacy' was a gendered term: primarily associated with women.[11] This was reinforced by other meanings of the word, also more 'appropriately' applied to women. A person with delicacy was defined as 'lovely', 'graceful', 'dainty', 'tender' and 'soft'.[12] Implicit in terms such as 'tender' and 'soft' was a suggestion of physical inferiority: again an implication more acceptably associated with women. Thus, delicacy was seen as a desirable trait in woman precisely because it defined her 'feminine' weakness. Importantly, however, the words delicacy and delicate also carried further meanings which enabled the delicate woman to be defined in more overtly pejorative terms. Most obviously, as delineated in chapter 3, delicacy as 'susceptible to hurt or injury', as proneness to disease, was written as not only a common attribute of all women but as a desirable attribute in the womanly woman.[13] Further, in direct opposition to the definition of delicacy as propriety, the etymology of the word gave rise to contradictory meanings: delicacy/delicate meant 'marked by cunning', 'artful', 'self-indulgent', and, even, 'alluring'.[14] While these pejorative definitions were not necessarily exclusive of men, the link between delicacy and womanhood was rendered even more obvious by a further definition of the term as 'effeminacy'.[15] To be delicate was thus to be unmanly. Effectively, the

---

11 Modesty and propriety were also more commonly linked with women.

12 *The Encyclopædic Dictionary: A New and Original Work of Reference to all the Words in the English Language, with a Full Account of Their Origin, Meaning, Pronunciation, and Use. With Numerous Illustrations* London n.d. [1880s], vol.2, s.v. 'delicate'.

13 *ibid.*

14 *ibid.*, vol.2, s.v. 'delicate', 'delicacy'.

15 *ibid.*, vol.2, s.v. 'delicacy'.

only possible link between delicacy and manhood was when the term was used to mean courteous and good mannered.

In its employment of the 'delicacy' arguments (delicacy here meaning female modesty), *New Grooves* offers the reader a series of implicit and explicit examples of delicate female behaviour in relation to the contradictory meanings of the term: that is, delicacy as an appropriate female attribute (softness, propriety, politeness, modesty) and delicacy as a signifier of inappropriate female behaviour (self-indulgence, artfulness, cunning). Through the contrasts the text makes between different forms of delicacy it constructs a distinction between genuine and false womanliness. Significantly, the text reveals that the meaning of 'delicacy' itself depends upon the context. For example, at the beginning of the novel, Ethel Borrodaile, the heroine, believes that her fiancé's (Ernest Burroughs) physical embraces are an appropriate declaration of his love for her and his desire to marry her. He later breaks the engagement. His embraces now become a signifier of his indelicacy. This is not unusual in the text: the meanings of delicacy, modesty, impropriety and indelicacy shift as the text progresses. Thus, delicacy is at various points alluded to as (male) sensitivity, as (female) sexual (im)propriety, as (female) invalidism, and as (female and male) social tact. Delicacy also becomes a notion invested with irony. This irony serves to highlight the difficulty confronted by the heroine, whose modest delicate impulses (which motivate her medical career) are continually under threat of being redefined as 'advanced' and improper aspirations primarily *because of* the characters who subscribe to alternative definitions of 'feminine' delicacy.

The text offers the reader numerous examples of unconscious and conscious misinterpretations of acceptable and unacceptable delicacy. At the beginning of the novel, Mrs Borrodaile is appalled at Arthur Weston's want of delicacy in visiting the home he has just bought from her and she attributes his 'indelicacy' to his class. Ironically, throughout the text, it is Mrs Borrodaile herself who behaves in the most crass manner, showing 'a want of careful avoidance of matters or subjects offensive or hurtful to others'.[16] Alternatively, Mrs Weston, Arthur's mother, is throughout both delicate (she is a bed-ridden invalid requiring frequent visits from her doctor) and *too* delicate-minded. She is always careful to

16 *ibid.*, vol.4, (1888), s.v. 'indelicacy'.

maintain 'a careful observance of propriety and good feeling'.[17] Therefore she shrinks from speaking 'in a way that could wound Flossy's delicacy, or cause that young lady one pang of self-reproach'.[18] Ironically, the text inscribes Flora Cartwright (Flossy) as delicate in the overtly pejorative sense of the word.[19] In this context, Mrs Weston's aversion to speaking what needs to be spoken is written as a dangerous form of conventional but misplaced delicacy.[20] This conflict between a social delicacy which shrinks from all pertaining to the sexual and a genuine delicacy which actually serves to preserve sexual propriety is reiterated throughout the text. It finds its most significant expression in the contrasts made between the apparently 'advanced' woman, running in 'new grooves' as a doctor, and the apparently 'ideal' woman who rejects such strong-minded behaviour.

In the course of the text, the apparently 'advanced' woman is reaffirmed as the 'ideal' and the apparently 'ideal' woman is exposed as the 'ornamental' and dangerous female. Distorted 'femininity' is thus displaced from the 'Lady Doctor' onto the very exponent of traditional 'femininity'. All three stereotypes ('advanced', 'ideal', 'ornamental') are thus problematised as the text demonstrates how different conceptions of delicacy result in different readings of womanliness. Importantly, the problem of how to 'read' suitable delicacy is not one presented to the reader to solve (the text is clear throughout which female is 'ideal') but is one presented to the hero, Arthur Weston. In the course of the text he is required to learn how to distinguish between artificial or negative delicacy and suitable delicacy. His initial confusion derives from the fact that his wife, Ethel, is ascribed characteristics typically associated with the 'ideal' woman but aspirations associated with the 'advanced'.

Prior to the introduction of the medical theme in the text, Weston can clearly read Ethel as a version of the 'ideal' woman. She is, from the beginning, an exponent of 'feminine' virtue. Aware that a changing economic environment may require a corresponding change in the role of women in society, she is, nonetheless, initially content to attain happiness through marriage. Educated in an

---

17 *ibid.*, vol.2, s.v. 'delicacy'.

18 Annie Thomas, *New Grooves*, London 1871, p.148. All further quotations are from this edition and will be referred to in the main text by page number.

19 See pp.138-40 below.

20 Mrs Weston is shrinking from offending Flossy by suggesting that Ethel and Arthur, as a married couple, might enjoy having their home to themselves.

old-fashioned mode, she is the possessor not of education but of female accomplishments, being 'laden with physical and mental graces, and saturated ... with the most elegant school-discipline'. (p.2) Forced to consider a career after the untimely death of her father, she is brought swiftly to the realisation of her total lack of suitability for any profession. Marriage provides her with the perfect means not only of supporting her mother and saving her home by wedding the man who buys it, but also of retaining all that is womanly in her character. Her relief at this denies any subversive intent in her willingness to work:

> 'to labour and be strong' was a right noble and righteous aspiration ... But now the onus of pioneering her own way through the pathless wilds of life was off her; and Ethel thanked God humbly and gratefully ... and realized that it was good that there was room for the development of the purely feminine faculties of caring and being cared for.
> You see she was no 'woman's right' woman, longing for place and power, for the suffrage, and the abandonment of the great mass of the softer and more obscure feminine duties and occupations ... she gave the preference to the burden that the love of husband and children, and the opportunity of making home happy and comfortable, laid upon her. (pp.75-6)

Her husband is delighted with his choice of a bride, rejoicing in her yielding ways: 'She is capable of an enormous amount of self-sacrifice and devotion: she will be a crown of glory to me' (p.52). This is ironic. Arthur's perception of Ethel's self-sacrificial nature is realised in a manner in which he had never imagined when she decides that it is her duty to her fellow women to study medicine. It is at this point in the text that Ethel apparently begins to embody the 'advanced' woman. However, Ethel has already been defined in terms of modest and delicate womanhood. Her horror at the thought of subjecting her body to the attentions of a male physician when on her honeymoon is written as a natural extension of the delicacy with which she has already been associated. Having 'fallen into delicate health abroad' (p.93) (a euphemism for becoming pregnant) she is attended on by a woman because 'so recently married' (p.93), with her husband 'also almost a stranger to her' (p.93), she displays 'an instinctive horror of subjecting herself and her symptoms to the analyzation of a male doctor, who was a stranger ... she revolted against a stranger with a strength of revolt that her husband, frightened as he was about her, was powerless to combat' (p.93). A sense of outraged modesty at the thought of exposing the female body to a male gaze is neatly evoked here. Some months later, back in England, the onset of labour again fills her with horror,

not because of her fear of childbirth but because of the indignity and indelicacy of receiving the attentions of a man other than her husband: 'Oh, for some woman now! oh, for some woman that I could rely on!' (p.111) Her natural modesty is further embarrassed by the indelicate situation of being attended on by her former fiancé, Burroughs.

Once in love with him, having been caressed and kissed by him, his attentions on her now are a perversion of the former pattern their relationship might have taken. Placed in the situation where he is not the progenitor but the deliverer of her child she 'writhed and suffered in her spirit because of that conventionalism which commanded that the very thing which most aggravated her agony, should be forced upon her now as good and efficient service' (p.115). After one final agitated attempt to escape the male doctor's attentions, Ethel is carried back to her room and the text drums its message home: 'they carried her up and replaced her on her bed, and her maid took off the delicately lace-trimmed dressing-gown ... and the night fell' (p.126). Importantly, at this point in the text the reader is informed that Arthur 'understood and sympathized with all the outraged feeling ... all the delicacy ... that was besetting his wife and nearly killing her' (p.114). The text does not pass by this opportunity it has created to preach to the reader. Arthur, 'was helpless, powerless' (p.114) and although '[h]e would have sacrificed his whole fortune to have been able to secure the services of one educated, trained,skilled woman now ... he would have sacrificed it in vain' (p.114), for '[a] thousand fortunes could not have brought that which Ethel needed to her bedside now, for he did not know the address of a single lady-doctor' (p.114). The consequence of Ethel's highly developed sense of modesty is loss of her baby and near loss of her own life. Following this experience Ethel determines to train as a doctor.

Ethel's decision to become a 'Lady Doctor' is foregrounded earlier in the text by narratorial comment which notes her noble 'feminine' desire to be of use to society in a self-sacrificial mode. She has often thought she 'was born to tend upon people ... when they're beyond themselves with pain and weariness' (p.80). Her thought becomes certainty after her own unhappy experiences. She resolves that the modesty she was forced to put in jeopardy will be retained in other women through her services: 'on her couch of pain she made the resolution solemnly to devote herself, should her life be spared, to the task of sparing other women this more than mortal anguish' (p.115). Despite the horror of her husband, mother, and Flossy, she maintains the rightness of her actions and defines her new role as saviour of other suffering women:

> There was ever present in her mind the sense of a profound conviction that a great social, moral evil was imbedded in the midst of our modern social system. There was ever ringing in her ears the sound of the unuttered cry of her sister-women, asking for leave and power to seek aid from, and to give aid to, one another. (p.131)

The text thus proclaims that the practice of medicine by women is neither a radical rejection of tradition, nor a sure way to pervert womanliness, nor even an appropriate means to attain economic security, but, simply, a vital necessity for upholding suitable female delicacy. Ethel's medical training itself becomes an acceptably conformist assertion of the nature of 'ideal' 'feminine' modesty. However, despite this attempt to justify the opening of medicine to women through recourse to the 'delicacy' arguments, there remains in Ethel's aspirations a suggestion of female bonding and a rejection of domesticity in favour of work outside the home which implies 'advanced' behaviour. Indeed, the text is aware that Ethel's desire to help her sisters could be read as overriding her wifely role as helpmeet to her husband. It resolves this conflict by its construction of Flossy as the apparently traditional but in reality 'ornamental' female who is more liable to contribute to the regression of womanhood than the apparently 'advanced' but delicate-minded heroine. It is through Flossy's attempt to infiltrate and destroy the Westons's marriage (that is, her intrusion into the love plot) that Arthur Weston must learn to read the difference between modest and immodest female delicacy: only then can the rightness of Ethel's medical aspirations be endorsed. That is, in this text, it is not Ethel as 'Lady Doctor' who must prove the validity of her choice of work. Instead, it is her husband who must prove he is capable of resisting the temptations of the alluring, self-indulgent, and thus 'delicate' 'ornamental' woman. Only then can he acknowledge Ethel's alternative 'delicacy' as a signifier of her womanhood.

The stereotype of the 'ornamental' woman became particularly popular during the 1860s and 70s and was typically associated with characteristics which corresponded with the overtly pejorative definitions of delicacy already outlined. The 'ornamental' woman, a modern victim of perceived social change, was written as neither perfectly womanly like the 'ideal' woman, nor as permanently damaged and dangerous like the 'advanced'. Instead, she was constructed as an inactive, selfish, and idle female who combined all the popular vices attributed to Eve, being jealous, self-centred and utilising flattery to gain her own ends. Lynn Linton's series of essays in *The Girl of the Period* are particularly virulent in their attack on this new breed of social corruption. The 'Girl of the Period', writes Linton, 'lives to please

herself, she does not care if she displeases everyone else', she loves pleasure and is indifferent to her duties, she is 'fast', but, notes Linton, gleefully, she 'does not marry easily ... she is only a poor copy of the real thing [woman]'.[21] Women, who were not to desire activity in the public economic world but were to be content with domesticisation, were simultaneously exhorted not to degenerate into 'ornamental' idleness. Dr Robert Bell's treatise on women's health also makes clear the difference between the ideally domesticated woman and the unideally 'ornamental' woman:

> A woman's time ought to be largely devoted to her household duties and the care of her children ... Nothing adds so much to the charm and attractions of home as the smile and presence of the loving wife and mother. Her value is priceless, and her own pleasure is far beyond that of the lethargic and selfish woman whose one thought is of herself and self-indulgence.[22]

It is clear from her first introduction to the reader that Flossy corresponds with the self-indulgent women of Linton and Bells's imaginations. The narrative notes that 'Flora Cartwright was undoubtedly the ornamental element of the house' (p.56) and it quickly becomes apparent that she is scheming, idle, selfish and, moreover, unashamed of her ornamental status.[23] Later in the text, in an attempt to denigrate Ethel's medical ambition, she opines alluringly: '*don't* you think, Arthur, that perhaps we merely ornamental women do less harm in our generation than the practically, uncomfortably useful ones?' (p.197) Significantly, her 'ornamental', 'delicate' (ingenious, artful, cunning) status is accompanied by a lack of suitable 'delicacy' (modesty, propriety, tact, grace). Her deliberate contravention of propriety when she congratulates her cousin (Arthur) on his engagement by kissing him on the mouth marks the beginning of her campaign to destroy the Westons's relationship. It is a campaign characterised by 'indelicacy' (indecency, wanting propriety), not least because she spends a considerable amount of time fantasising about the death of Ethel and her own imagined subsequent liaison with Arthur. She also continually manages to imply to Weston that his wife still yearns for Ernest Burroughs and expresses feigned surprise that Ethel gives no thought to

---

21 Lynn Linton, *The Girl of the Period and Other Social Essays*, London 1883, vol.1, pp.3,5,7.

22 Bell, *Woman in Health and Sickness; or, What She Ought to Know for the Exigencies of Daily Life*, Glasgow 1889, pp.166-7.

23 Her name is used with irony throughout.

Burroughs's potential marriage for 'I have thought about him a great deal, and I have never been in love with him' (p.194).

Flossy's manipulations, fantasies and murderous impulses are impressive and far more entertaining than Ethel's noble aspirations. Her innuendoes border on the blatant in their impropriety; and, indeed, neither Ethel nor the reader have any difficulty in seeing through her pose as the womanly woman. Arthur Weston, however, is continually taken in. Ironically, it is his own delicacy, in part deriving from his sense of duty to a family member, in part from both vanity and embarrassment at knowing Flossy cares for him, that makes him reluctant to think the worst of her. Arthur's inability to perceive that Flossy is the embodiment of one form of delicacy while his wife is the embodiment of an entirely different form of delicacy becomes most dangerous at the point where Ethel announces her desire to train in medicine. This is just the point at which the 'ideal' woman becomes in danger of being read as the 'advanced'. It is now that the 'ornamental' woman can seize her chance to promote herself as the 'ideal' woman and cunningly use her artful 'delicacy' to allure Arthur Weston away from his wife.

Flossy is able to undermine the Weston marriage precisely because of the text's association of its 'ideal' woman with a career commonly denoted as 'advanced' behaviour. While Ethel is absorbed in thinking about her decision to practise medicine, Flossy is busy denouncing it and pitying the 'unlucky men, who were made conspicuously of no account by their very advanced female relations' (p.132). Despite Ethel's pledge 'not to neglect one of the duties I fulfil now' (p.136), Arthur cannot help believing that Flossy is right: if his wife studies medicine he will be neglected. Flossy creates further misery by playing on his 'masculine' vanity and persuading him that Ethel's 'advanced' behaviour will make him look foolish: 'this notion of being a woman-doctor, and of smoothing the way ... for others to follow in her footsteps, will make you ridiculous' (p.138). He begins to feel that if only his wife were more like Flossy she would be 'as alive to individual claims that were made upon her, and less inclined to go out into the open and expose me to derision, perhaps!' (pp.138-9) Eventually he comes to the conclusion, as she has intended, that Flossy would have been a more appropriate wife:

> she drew clever, vicious little caricatures on the margin of her letter-paper depicting the would-be female professors of medicine in every absurd position that was conceivable. And Arthur Weston ... came to the conclusion, with a pang, that Flossy was a more womanly woman, and would have been more amenable to his influence, if fate had willed that she might be so, than his wife. (p.182)

Thus, the disintegration of marital relations between Arthur and Ethel is created by Flossy's ability to imply that she is more delicate then Ethel (in the modest sense) *through* behaving in an improper delicate manner (in the artful sense). Flossy, the idle 'ornamental' woman, not the aspiring 'Lady Doctor', is thus written as the new Eve threatening the downfall of the modern Adam. Usefully, Flossy's partial success deflects attention from the intimation which the text cannot avoid that its heroine ought to be labelled 'advanced' rather than 'ideal' by virtue of her profession. It also, however, creates a further conflict of interest. Given that the novel fully endorses Ethel's decision to study medicine, it finds itself privileging female (Ethel's) definitions of suitable 'feminine' modesty and delicacy over male (Arthur's). Moreover, Flossy's ability to manipulate Weston derives from her 'successful study of the weakest parts of his character' (p.173) which enable 'this good, moral man, who really loved his wife' (p.173) to fall for 'the vain delusion that he called his cousin' (p173). By its closure, however, these implications of male weakness are completely rejected. Flossy's magnificent machinations are undermined by the revelation of their mundane motivation as nothing other than the 'Girl of the Period's' lack of sensible occupation:

> It was only that Flossy had nothing better to do with her mental powers than to make little plots ... and meddle promiscuously with the minor interests of others when they ran counter to her own in any way. An idle woman, imperfectly adjusted in her sphere, is about as dangerous a reptile as can be met with within the bounds of civilisation. (p.191)

Weston's eventual correct 'reading' of her character strips her of her power: Flossy's last attempt to malign Ethel backfires. 'Ethel is so absorbed in her own plans and schemes that dear aunt might die a thousand deaths before Ethel would interrupt her own career of theoretical philanthropy'(p.210) she says eagerly, only to receive the rebuke: 'you are insinuating things that only malice and hatred can prompt you to utter against a woman who would not utter similar things of the vilest woman she had ever given her hand to in friendship. Imitate her in that at least, if you cannot in what you term her strong-mindedness' (p.211). Here, the narrative resolves its other conflict: Ethel may be acting against the norm but her husband now perceives that it is not strong-minded behaviour but 'feminine' behaviour. Moreover, the narrator informs us that her main aim in life has always been to commit herself to hearth and home:

> The pursuit of a profession that may, nay, that must, work a great moral good among her sister women, no more unsexes the most feminine of delicate-minded, soft-handed ladies than does the ... [making of] wools and beads into intricate ... patterns. The womanly interests in home and husband and children are ever the dearest, the troubles and anxieties concerning them ever the nearest. (p.208)

By the close of the text it is clear that the 'Lady Doctor' is acceptable precisely because she serves the needs of a male hegemony which defines appropriate female delicacy as modest behaviour. The text uses Burroughs to reiterate this. Proposing to Ethel's young protégée, Meg Wyman, the latter refuses to marry him unless he supports her medical aspirations, only to find that Burroughs himself defines her decision to study medicine as a fitting proof of a womanliness it is in his own interests to defend. Ultimately, despite the text's repeated endorsement of the acceptable nature of Ethel's delicacy as opposed to the unacceptable nature of Flossy's, it is because a desire to aid fellow women serves the interests of a male definition of female delicacy that it is endorsed. Ethel has, after all, been playing her role as helpmeet to men by attempting to retain for them the modesty of their womenfolk by screening the female body from the unsightly gaze of the male doctor. The apparent unconventionality of a woman doctor thus becomes contained by male defined female delicacy. Rendered safe by a protective husband, all potentiality for radicality is negated:

> It was an utterly different thing to laugh and scoff at the revival of decency while he was a bachelor; but as a married man - as the husband of a beautiful young wife, who was endowed with the most profound sensibility - it occurred to him that there was a great deal to be said on behalf of the system which set forth the desirability of women serving women at the most trying period of their lives. (p.212)

4.2 The 'Lady Doctor' Abroad

In *New Grooves*, women serving other women, conveniently, also serve to maintain the modesty and delicacy associated with the acceptable 'feminine'. Calls for the preservation of woman's delicacy by opening the medical profession to women were thus clearly an attempt to write the female body in terms which it was difficult for those opposed to female practitioners to denigrate, given that the arguments appropriated versions of the female body accepted in 'official' ideologies. A similar appropriation, and one also linked with delicacy, is apparent *vis-à-vis* the campaigners' arguments concerning the spiritual and moral role of the doctor. As

already shown in chapter 3, woman's purported proclivity for immoral behaviour was seen as a bar to her entrance to the medical profession. Yet those calling for women doctors also claimed the moral highground. Blackwell, for example, outlines a link between spirituality and medicine in several texts, most notably *Christianity in Medicine*. According to Blackwell, the doctor must have an unwavering faith because '[t]he Art of Healing is the noblest of all human arts, when moulded by religious truth ... [i]rreligion in medicine, would render it the most dangerous of all arts'.[24] Similarly, an article in the progressive *Victoria Magazine*, arguing for female practitioners, states:

> The medical profession, unlike most others, possesses a double charm for its members; it partakes both of a worldly and a religious aspect ... it allows the practitioner a greater opportunity of indulging in good works than any other profession extant, not even excepting the clerical itself. [25]

The perception of the doctor as a spiritual and moral advisor to the sick arose partly from the exceptional circumstances in which the doctor was thought to meet with patients: adversity in the form of sickness might result in loss of faith which the doctor could help to restore; alternatively, 'corrupt' patients taken ill by a profligate lifestyle might be influenced for the better by the physician. In terms of women doctors and their patients there was one particular sphere in which the female practitioner gained a relatively swift and widespread credence and acceptability. Ironically, given common claims of a female proclivity for immorality, it was the spiritual and moral elements of her work, combined with the demands of delicacy, which justified her entry into this medical arena; that of the colonies. The colonisation of formerly 'backward' countries with few European systems of transport, education or medical care had resulted in a programme of 'improvements', initiated by the empire builders. In the sphere of medicine it was apparent by the late 1860s that medical men could not provide aid to the women of these nations due to the demands of custom and religion. If an 'efficient', 'western', health care scheme was to be effective in both alleviating present suffering and providing education in preventative measures then the participation of skilled medical women was essential.

---

24 Blackwell, *Christianity in Medicine: An Address Delivered Before the Christo-theosophical Society, December 18th, 1890*, London 1891, pp.9-10.

25 Anon., 'Lady Doctors', *Victoria Magazine*, 3, (6/1864), 126.

In 1881 the Maharani of Punnah received medical attention from a missionary woman, Miss Bielby. She had arrived in Lucknow in 1876 and had opened a dispensary and small hospital. Bielby was requested by the Maharani to inform Queen Victoria of the plight of Indian women who were denied access to medical care. On her return to Britain she duly did so. As a result, in 1884, the Countess of Dufferin, whose husband had been appointed Viceroy of India, was summoned by the sovereign. It was suggested that she be responsible for implementing female medical aid to the women of India. Dufferin formed the National Association for Supplying Medical Aid to the Women of India. Although 'medical' women were already working in India under the auspices of missionary organisations, there were no systemised medical schemes, few 'western' facilities and the majority of the women had no medical training. The association aimed to supply trained women for service in India and to provide access to medical care through the formation of dispensaries and hospitals. Moreover, its ultimate aim was to train Indian women as doctors, acknowledging that 'the Indian woman will naturally prefer, whenever it is possible, to have her compatriots as medical attendants'.[26] Funding by British subscribers and leading figures within the Indian community (the Maharajahs of Ulwar and Durbunhah, for example) enabled the building of hospitals and dispensaries. The association explicitly disassociated itself from any connotation of mission, refusing to employ women with a missionary vocation, and stated that conversion to Christianity was not its aim, albeit simultaneously defining alternative belief systems as inferior:

> we are anxious scrupulously to respect their own wishes and their own religions, and even their own less sacred opinions and prejudices. We wish to force nothing upon them, and to suggest nothing which can do violence to their feelings, or which can be said to tamper in the very slightest degree with the exclusion and the privacy in which Oriental women live.[27]

The Countess of Dufferin's association was unusual in its objectives. Far more conventional were the disparate missionary organisations also intent upon providing medical women for work in the colonies. By the end of the 1870s those missionary societies already involved in the sphere of medicine overseas (for

---

26 Harriet Dufferin, 'The National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India', *Asiatic Quarterly Review*, 1, (4/1886), 262.

27 *ibid.*, 264.

example, The Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, The Society for Female Education in the East, and The Delhi Female Medical Mission) had acknowledged the need to employ professional medical women. A writer in the *Indian Female Evangelist*, for example, claims that '[w]ithout a competent knowledge of medicine, the lady accoucheur cannot properly discharge her functions and a correct knowledge of medicine cannot be acquired without an acquaintance with Anatomy and Physiology'.[28] The need for trained doctors was also a recurring topic in the pages of *Medical Missions at Home and Abroad. The Quarterly Magazine of the Medical Missionary Association*. The medical missions, desirous of saving the souls of 'heathens', perceived that the provision of physical succour to the 'uneducated' provided an ideal opportunity to introduce them to Christian teaching. Whilst the missionary doctor aimed at 'healing the sick and curing bodily disease', she could simultaneously set 'before the sufferers the first principles of the Gospel of Christ'.[29] The 'superior' medical woman imparted knowledge to the 'ignorant'; alleviated suffering; and simultaneously acclaimed her work for God's glory. The doctor's role as overseer of a patient's spiritual and moral welfare was thus vital in converting 'heathens' to Christianity, and the female missionary doctor had validated access to the colonised communities through her role as healer of the body. Medical missions in both Africa and India funded dispensaries and hospitals and, after 1876, employed qualified female medical missionaries.

The demands made in Britain for medical women were concurrent, therefore, with those made for medical women in other parts of the empire. The 'Lady Doctor' in this context was constructed as a woman fulfilling a necessary and truly Christian duty. It was difficult to berate women who sacrificed their lives (sometimes literally) in following the calling of God by working overseas as medical missionaries. The need for fully trained women working for the empire, conveniently, required admittance to medical schools in Britain. The arguments of those opposed to women physicians were thus neatly sublimated by those training as missionary doctors who could claim their work was for both empire and God.

---

28 C.R. Francis, 'Medical Missions to the Women of India', *Indian Female Evangelist*, 6, (10/1881), 152.

29 Anon., 'Introduction', *Medical Missions at Home and Abroad. The Quarterly Magazine of the Medical Missionary Association*, 1, (7/1878), 1.

Additionally, particular circumstances in the colonies made attendance on women by other women not a matter of choice but an imperative.[30]

Hilda Gregg's novel *Peace with Honour* (1897) constructs a version of the missionary 'Lady Doctor' at work in Africa. Like *New Grooves*, the text is determined to delineate the acceptability of its heroine's choice of career and deals quite openly with the way in which the existence of the 'Lady Doctor' problematises conceptions of gender. However, while the text attempts some rewriting of 'femininity', it simultaneously endorses a racist ideology through its inscription of 'Ethiopia' as a form of the Orient. By imposing upon the Ethiopia of the text a version of the 'east', it rewrites the actual status of the country in the 1890s and justifies both its racism and its 'feminism'. Before proceeding to demonstrate this, it is useful at this point to turn to Edward Said's definitions of Orientalism.

Said writes that 'Orientalism is - and does not simply represent - a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with "our" world'.[31] From this starting-point he goes on to offer numerous examples where the Orient has been constructed as something to be decoded, written about, and translated. He identifies the changing nature of Orientalist constructions of Islam and refers to a series of common stereotypes in Orientalism which depict the Oriental as irrational, depraved, different, childlike, despotic, and backward.[32] Perhaps most significantly, for my purposes, Said notes that in the late nineteenth century the common stereotypes he has identified in Orientalism were:

> linked ... to elements in Western society (delinquents, the insane, women, the poor) having in common an identity best described as lamentably alien. Orientals were rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analyzed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved or confined or - as the colonial powers openly coveted their territory - taken over. The point is that the very designation of something as Oriental involved an already pronounced evaluative judgment.[33]

---

30 See pp.152-3 below.

31 Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, London 1995 [first published 1978, reprinted with a new afterward], p.12.

32 See, for example, *ibid.*, pp.203-4, 207.

33 *ibid.*, p.207.

He continues: 'latent Orientalism also encouraged a peculiarly (not to say invidiously) male conception of the world ... Orientalism ... was an exclusively male province ... [t]his is especially evident in the writing of travelers [sic] and novelists: women are usually the creatures of a male-power fantasy.'[34] Following on from Said's observations, literary critics have analysed the way in which late-Victorian empire/adventure fiction typically acts as a means of asserting conventional conceptions of white, British manliness; they have also noted both the relative absence of women in such texts and the association of 'femininity' with primitivity, sensuality, and nature.[35] It is in the light of these critical perspectives that Gregg's novel is particularly interesting. It conforms to the Saidian definition of latent Orientalism in its transformation of Ethiopia and male Ethiopians into Oriental stereotypes. However, it also offers the reader an empire/adventure story not focused solely on manliness; an adventure story which provides a space where (white) women can and do resist (white) male attempts to write their identity for them. As the text progresses it becomes apparent that in order to diffuse the anxiety generated by the 'Lady Doctor's' threat to (white) manliness, the latter must be reiterated not in relation to its opposition to womanliness but in relation to its opposition to the Oriental. In this text, it is not woman who is denied individuality while denoted as different (to white man) but the Oriental.[36]

The choice of Ethiopia for the text's construction of the Oriental is highly significant. Up until the 1870s Europe had little interest in Ethiopia. Indeed, diplomatic attempts by Ethiopia to make European alliances were met with indifference.[37] However, following the opening of the Suez Canal (1869) and the later British occupation of Egypt (1882), the geographical location of Ethiopia led to an increased interest in it as a potential colony and, concurrently, an increased anxiety about its independence.[38] In 1885, Italy garrisoned Massawa. Within a year

---

34 *ibid.*

35 See, for example, Joseph Bristow, *Empire Boys: Adventures in a Man's World*, London 1991 and Gail Ching-Liang Low, *White Skins/Black Masks: Representation and Colonialism*, London 1996.

36 Said's premise that the Oriental is something constructed by the Orientalist in terms of difference leads him to conclude that 'Orientalists are neither interested in nor capable of discussing individuals', *op.cit.*, p.154. It is interesting that Gregg's text projects difference/lack of individuality onto the Oriental in order to make her 'Lady Doctor's' individuality and autonomy acceptable.

37 See Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1974*, London 1991, pp.36-7, 50-1.

38 For a full discussion of the ongoing internal conflicts in Ethiopia, and of British and Italian involvement, see *ibid.*, pp.60-68, 72-84.

the Italians had begun to push forward into Ethiopia.[39] That Ethiopia would not tolerate this threat to its independence should have been clear to Europe by 1891 when the ruler of Ethiopia, Menelik II, declared in a 'Circular to the Kings in Europe' that he did not intend 'to listen quietly when governments from distant lands say that they will divide up Africa'.[40] By the end of 1895 it was obvious that if Italy was to attain its objective to colonise Ethiopia, military action would be needed.[41] The Ethiopian defeat of Italy at the Battle of Adwa in 1896 secured its status as one of only two African nations to retain independence in the period. After this 'shocking' defeat there was a rush of European attempts to attain treaties and form politico-commercial alliances with Ethiopia through recourse to diplomacy. Missions to Ethiopia were sent from Britain, France, Italy, Russia, Austria-Hungary and Greece. As early as 1897, Italy, Britain, and France had a diplomatic presence in Ethiopia.[42]

Bahru Zewde argues that it was the symbolic nature of the defeat (white man beaten by black man) that made the 1896 battle so significant.[43] For some in Europe it brought into sharp focus fears about the possibility of wide-spread revolt in the 'dark continent': the image of Ethiopia as 'free' yet constrained by the need to collaborate with Europe, black/'heathen', yet Christian, clearly crystallised ambivalent attitudes towards Africa and the 'western' presence there. Here was a country/'race' which embodied the threat of the 'other' by its recalcitrance, suggested the need to restrain it, and embodied the fear that what was to be restrained was too powerful to be controlled.

Gregg's novel was published a year after the Italian defeat and in the year when the British managed to attain a treaty with Ethiopia committing the latter to neutrality in the ongoing Anglo-French rivalry in Africa.[44] The purpose of the British

---

39 This was at the instigation of the British who wanted to protect their interests in the region against possible French competition over Egypt and the Suez Canal. From the Italians' point of view it was a start to their own attempts at colonial expansion. See *ibid.*, p.56.

40 Quoted in David Levering Lewis, *The Race to Fashoda: European Colonialism and African Resistance in the Scramble for Africa*, London 1988, p.136.

41 For a brief discussion of their failed non-military tactics, see Zewde, *op.cit.*, pp.75-6.

42 See *ibid.*, p.111.

43 *ibid.*, p.81. Zewde also points out that European reaction to the defeat was variable: some were shocked, others used it to argue against colonial expansion.

44 See Levering Lewis, *op.cit.*, p.136. He writes: 'By the end of 1897, Menilek had used French arms and Russian artillery instructors to pulverize the Italians at Adwa; agreed by secret treaty to aid France's military in its Congo thrust (in return for arms and technical assistance); signed a treaty with the British secretly committing himself to neutrality in Anglo-French rivalry (in exchange for assurances

'Ethiopian Mission' in Gregg's text is to form a commercial treaty with Ethiopia: this element of the plot clearly derives from the actual politicking which took place during the 1880s and 1890s. However, in all other respects the novel's construction of Ethiopia and the Ethiopians is a clear white fantasy wish-fulfilment, possibly in response to the actual humiliation Ethiopia caused to the 'west' by its show of superior military strength. The creation of an Oriental Ethiopia enables the text to displace anxiety generated by the fearful connotations of a 'free' Ethiopia. The actual diplomatic, political, and military tactics employed by Menelik II and various European parties are rewritten in a manner which constructs the Ethiopian as an Oriental stereotype and the white man as innately his superior. Most importantly, and most ironically, the text's main means of denoting Ethiopia as Oriental is to write it as a perfidious Islamic nation: in fact, Ethiopia in this period was largely Christian.[45] The text then adds to this basic signifier of Ethiopia's 'otherness' and inferiority a series of stereotypes which simply confirm the associations created by constructing the Ethiopians as Moslem. Predictably, Ethiopians in the text are written as uncivil, disorderly 'heathens', who lie, lack honour, are backward and attempt, unsuccessfully, to manipulate white power. In particular, the Ethiopian men are constructed as Oriental in terms of their absence of difference (to each other): the troops who escort the Mission to the imaginary capital of Ethiopia 'resembled one another in that they were all fierce of face, all unbridled of speech, all extremely dirty'.[46] At the sight of them 'the younger members of the Mission felt their hearts sink ... as they took their last look at the fort - that isolated outpost of Britain and civilisation on the borders of barbarism' (p.69).[47]

---

of Ethiopian independence); and negotiated an alliance with the khalifa against Britain, France, and Belgium.'

45 Ironically, on the grounds of Christian solidarity against Islam, Ethiopia appealed to Europe, in particular to Britain, for help to ward off Egypt. However, Egypt was perceived to be far more useful to Europe than Ethiopia which was ignored. See Zewde, *op.cit.*, pp.50-1. Said notes that 'Islam ... was typically Oriental for Orientalists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries', *op.cit.* p.103, hence, possibly, Gregg's transformation of a Christian nation into an Islamic, 'inferior' one.

46 'Sydney C. Grier' [Hilda Gregg], *Peace with Honour*, Edinburgh 1897, p.69. All further quotations are from this edition and will be referred to in the main text by page number. This quotation epitomises the way in which the Oriental Ethiopians are both denied individuality (all are dirty etc.) and inscribed as different from the British.

47 This quotation is typical of the way the text delineates the Mission as braving the centre of barbarity, surviving it, and leaving triumphant.

In contrast, despite attempts by the 'heathens' to blackmail, bully or bribe them, the British remain the epitome of the 'civilised'. Wherever they are, whatever is happening to them, they retain the manners and morals of the drawing-room. As the American journalist, Hicks, comments when visiting the mission's headquarters in Kubbet-Ul-Haj, 'hanged if I didn't think I had got into a Belgravian drawing-room ... instead of finding a party of civilised white people in the midst of Ethiopia!' (p.78)[48] In another scene, the Oriental attempt to attack the British flag is averted (by British bravery) and Hicks comments to the General 'shake! You are a white man, you are. You have licked that poor ordinary crowd of niggers in a way to earn you the eternal gratitude of every Western stranger that circumstances may drive to sojourn in this uncared-for state' (p.125).[49] The text even resorts to making the Orientals themselves exponents of the superior nature of English civility. Even they accept that, in contrast to their own proclivity for lies, the English deal with their worst enemies with honour: captive in a fortress, the English women are questioned by its Governor, Abd-ur-Rahim who states emphatically 'I will but question them, and believe what they say, for the English always tell the truth.'(p.305) In contrast, the white men will not accept his word 'on the ground that he was not an Englishman' (p.308).

Thus, in the process of defining the Moslem Oriental as backward and dangerous, the superior identity of the Christian, British male is reaffirmed over and against him. By repeatedly re-enacting for the reader the basis of the difference between 'east' and 'west' the text finds that it can contain the anxiety generated by a recalcitrant black country. It can also, however, then rewrite the conventional white Victorian version of womanhood without demasculinising white manhood. Thus, the narrative can justify the existence of the 'Lady Doctor' only by transposing her function as 'other' onto the Oriental.[50] In this sense, the Orientalism at work in

---

48 The text is indiscriminate in its racism: the American journalist is more tolerable than the Ethiopians because he is white but he is still lacking in the honour of the British. Likewise, the agent of the imaginary country neighbouring Ethiopia is described in anti-semitic terms.

Ethiopian place names in the text are all imaginary, as are the names given to neighbouring countries.

49 Hicks's comment about Ethiopia being uncared for is very ironic: Menelik II undertook much politicking to retain Ethiopia's independence.

50 It should be clear by now that racism is endemic to the text's construction of Ethiopia as Oriental. A fuller discussion of the complicated and often tedious delineation of the perfidy of the Ethiopians and the dangers of succumbing to their alien culture (seen particularly in the character of John Beg, a white man living as a Moslem) is beyond the remit of this thesis.

the text is actually a means of constructing an (imaginary) Ethiopia as a discursive site for British cultural anxieties over changing conceptions of gender.[51] That is, its Orientalism is linked to the text's exploration of conceptions of difference in relation to whiteness, manliness and womanliness. This exploration, which focuses on the attainment of 'peace with honour' between Ethiopia and Britain, and between the hero and heroine, is not, however, without ambivalence.

The title of the text is an allusion to a commonly known phrase first used by Disraeli on his return from the Congress of Berlin in 1878, a congress itself concerned with conflicting European colonialist objectives. Disraeli's 'achievements' were hailed as a triumph of diplomacy. The use of this phrase as a title and repeated references to it in the text are one way in which the novel attempts to displace the fearful connotations of a 'free' Ethiopia: British 'peace with honour' will win the day. However, the progression towards 'peace with honour' between the hero and heroine is also a means of sublimating a destabilising of gender roles effected by the heroine's medical career, without threat to white 'masculine' identity.

At its simplest, the title of the novel refers to the precarious attempt of the British 'Ethiopian Mission' to obtain, without recourse to war or loss of honour, a commercial treaty with the King of Kubbet-Ul-Haj. In turn, the commercial treaty will bring political advantages: the foundation of a British outpost. The title, however, also refers to the romance plot where peace with honour must be attained between the hero and heroine before their marital happiness is assured. The two plots, colonialist and romantic, unfold simultaneously; and as the text progresses it becomes apparent that each is dependent on the other for the success of its outcome. It is the Victoria Cross hero, Dick North, who provides the main link between the text's two narrative strands. North, manly man, upholder of the empire and revered for his courage, has an antagonistic and derogatory view of what he defines as unideal woman. Indeed, on one level, his dislike of the 'New Woman' is juxtaposed with that of the 'heathen' (Fath-ud-Din and his followers) dislike of the Ethiopian Mission. This implied link is further exacerbated as the text progresses and it becomes apparent that Dick's concepts of womanhood bear more relation to the 'eastern', 'Moslem' view of woman (negative) than to the 'western', 'Christian' (positive).[52]

---

51 See Said's point, quoted above on p.145, that Orientalism is more about 'us', 'our' world than about 'them'.

52 For further details of the link the text makes between North and the Orientals see pp.157-9 below.

Dr Georgia Keeling epitomises all that North finds distasteful in a woman. His outmoded and unreasoned definitions of womanhood, and his inability to concede that the woman doctor's career is as vital to the empire as his own, require that he be educated. North must acknowledge the validity of Keeling's profession and proclaim it acceptable in a woman before a permanent alliance between them can be effected. The educative process which results in their union is paralleled by the British education of the Ethiopians; the latter's attempt to trick the British and overcome their superior rationale and civility must be defeated before a commercial alliance can be attained. It is only when North has accepted the incontrovertible nature of Keeling's career and when the Ethiopians have accepted defeat by the British that peace with honour can be secured in both plots.

North's opinions on medical women and on the ideal place of women in society are verbalised with passion and inflamed rhetoric. They are conformist but at no point endorsed in the narrative. Rather, they are continually undermined by an exposition of North's desire to maintain traditional gender polarity neither because it is innate nor because it is practical but because it upholds his own sense of manliness. Ironically, North firmly believes his views are based upon reason while to the reader and to the other (white) characters it is clear that they stem from irrational emotions arising from a piqued pride at Georgia's rejection of his offer of marriage in the pre-history of the text. Further, Dick is primarily threatened by Georgia's autonomy. As his sister tells him:

> 'You would have liked Georgia to develop entirely on your lines. When you find that she has a character and a will of her own, you don't like it.'
> 'I like a woman to be a woman. The lady doctors are not womanly.'
> 'Indeed! Who is the best judge of what is womanly, you or a woman?'
> 'Of course,' Dick went on ... 'it is their business ... But you will find, Mab, that men like a woman to be gentle and soft and clinging, looking to them for protection.'
> 'Men!' said Mabel, contemptuously. 'Who cares what men like?'
> 'Well, a good many women seem to think rather a lot of it. No one wants a woman to be brave and self-reliant. Now Miss Keeling's manner - it implied that she could look after herself.' (p.12)

As the text progresses it becomes clear that it is women who are the best judge of what is womanly; simultaneously it becomes clear that it is white men who are the best judges of what is civilised. On the arrival of the Mission in Ethiopia, and

on its journey into the interior of the country, the superior nature of the British becomes under threat and their definitions of peace and honour are destabilised by the machinations of Fath-ud-Din. This occurs concurrently with the challenge made by Dr Keeling to Dick's erroneous assessments of women. The threat to the former is defeated in conventionally racist terms: by an exposition of British bravery, diplomacy and trustworthiness. The challenge to the latter is secured, not defeated, by the revelation of qualities in Keeling which do not accord with North's definition of the 'feminine'. Keeling's presence on the Mission as woman and doctor becomes an essential factor in both overcoming North's irrationality and in countering the ignorance of the 'heathens' who threaten stability. Without her qualities of courage and self-reliance, so despised by Dick, the Mission would be jeopardised. Her medical presence is justified on two levels: the religious and the political.

As was suggested above, the work of women doctors overseas gained credibility through an emphasis upon the missionary aspect of medical aid to 'uncivilised' countries. Evangelical societies, rarely the upholders of women's emancipation, served the cause of the pioneers by demanding that qualified women fulfil the dual role of minister to the body and the soul. In 1888 the *Sunday Magazine* appealed for funds for Garrett Anderson's New Hospital for Women and Children, specifically reminding its readers that '[m]any medical women, preparing for India, practise first at this hospital'.[53] Typically, it was argued that female practitioners would be able to convert 'native' women to Christianity and the reports from various missionary societies continually aligned medical work with missionary zeal:

> We do not see why [medicine] should not be most efficiently combined with missionary work. Some of us know the value of a truly Christian physician in this country... how much more in those prison-like homes of India ... help to the suffering soul is a greater, nobler gift, and the one opens up the door to the other. Through the medium of medical mission we hope enlightenment, education and the best of all Christianity are to follow.[54]

Such arguments gained further credibility when it was realised that women in the colonies could not receive the attentions of medical men. The arguments concerning the indelicacy of being attended on by a male doctor in Britain were less easily dismissed in relation to women forbidden by custom and religion to receive

53 Anne Beale, 'A Lady's Hospital', *Sunday Magazine*, Annual Volume, (1888), 483.

54 Anon., 'Medical Missions for Women', *Indian Female Evangelist*, 6, (1/1882), 203.

their attentions. Horrific tales detailed agonising deaths caused by the absence of medical women; these led to demands for female doctors to relieve suffering:

> It would be as easy to restore the down to a bruised butterfly's wing as to give back self-respect, and with it all that makes life worth living, to a zenana lady who has been exposed to the gaze or touch of a man other than a near relation. Custom of the country debars a respectable woman from receiving ministry to body, soul, or mind, unless it comes from one of her sex.[55]

The objectives of the Ethiopian Mission in Gregg's novel are political and commercial not religious and, as the King has requested the presence of a woman doctor to tend his wife, Keeling plays a part in attaining these objectives. Yet the term mission evokes notions of Christian benevolence which the text exploits through a portrayal of Georgia's involvement in Christian medical work *en route* to Kubbet-Ul-Haj. On arrival at the port of Khemistan a female missionary from Bab-Us-Sahal seeks the aid of Dr Keeling. An unbaptised woman is dying and her Christian husband losing his faith. Keeling's immediate decision to journey to the village and treat the woman is greeted by North with customary horror. An attempt to persuade her to await the arrival of a male doctor is countered by her calm rejoinder '[s]urely you must have forgotten that a gentleman would never be admitted into the women's apartments?'(p.45) Bound by his strict notions of propriety, North objects to the sacrifice of her own comfort for the sake of a 'native' woman: 'this is absurd! You are throwing away your own health. What does this woman signify to you?' (p.46) Moreover, his real objection is a dislike at being confronted with her autonomy and her professional status. both are things which thwart his self-perceived chivalrous role to protect women: 'It makes me perfectly sick to see these women parading their independence of men, and glorying in what they know, and ought never to have learnt.' (p.48)

---

55 D.L. Woolmer, 'Lady Doctors in Heathen Lands', *The Quiver*, Annual Volume, (1899), 97. There were, inevitably, those who denied the need for medical missionary women, citing the claims as unfounded and exaggerated. See, for example, West, *Medical Women: A Statement and an Argument*, London 1878, pp.16-7. West cites a letter from Dr Ewart to Sir Joseph Fayrer: 'The truth is that female physicians do not command the confidence of either sex in India ... [t]he native women in India are quite shrewd enough to pin their faith to the colours of the male doctors ... [t]he supposed opposition on the part of the natives to the admission of male physicians into their zenanas is greatly exaggerated, and quite contrary to my experience. '

North cannot comprehend that Keeling's role as doctor requires that she ignore his definitions of 'femininity' and administer aid to the sick even at the expense of her own comfort and his chivalrous impulses. He is unable to perceive that his notions of correct female behaviour place superficial ideals above the highest ideal of all: Christian duty. The Christian doctor is unconcerned with the social status of the patient; the Christian woman doctor must ignore male definitions which work against the glory of God. North's emotional inability to recognise the Christian aspect of Keeling's medical work renders his opinions absurd in the light of her more penetrating comprehension of the religious significance of her role. Her successful cure of the woman patient affirms the faith of the villagers and upholds the work of the missionary organisation. Keeling needs no educating in the primary importance of the soul:

> 'It was worth while going through all the training, and some of it was bad enough at the time, simply for this night's work. If I had never attended another case, I should be glad I was a doctor, if only to remember the happiness of those poor Christians in that village ... The people, heathen and Christians alike, took it as a miracle.' (pp.54-5)

Keeling's career and her ambitions to work in the zenana after the Ethiopian Mission is completed present her status as a 'Lady Doctor' as one which fulfils Christian, womanly duty. For North to accede to her viewpoint requires an acknowledgment that his definitions of womanliness are undermined by a woman's definition of her own womanly nature. For North to refuse to accede to this is to deny the Godly nature of her work. North is required to learn that Georgia will not compromise her professional status. Peace with honour can only be attained between them by his acceptance of her definitions of what is Godly and beneficial to society. Thus, despite his continued attempts to force her to revert to his viewpoint he is forced to acknowledge that:

> Georgia was still a doctor, and displayed no symptoms of being convinced, whether against her will or otherwise, by his arguments against the existence of medical women, or of discontinuing the practice of her profession. Nay more, Dick was beginning to see that it was unlikely she would ever be so convinced, and that if there was to be peace between them it must be on the basis of acquiescence in facts as they were. (p.57)

As the mission journeys towards its ultimate destination, Keeling's religious work continues. Her treatment of women in villages where missionaries have

previously been refused entry is instrumental in opening the path to them in the future and 'welcomed on account of her medical skill in many places where they had not been able to gain a footing ... [she] had the pleasure of knowing that she left these houses open for her friends' (p.57).[56] On arrival at Kubbet-Ul-Haj, the political supersedes the religious; indeed the religious must be set aside for Keeling has been told explicitly that medical missionary work must not be undertaken here. The uneasy truce attained between Keeling and North which has buried rather than resolved their differences is now threatened; synchronous to the threat made to the uneasy peace between the mission and the Ethiopians and to British honour.

Keeling's role on the mission is to heal the King of Ethiopia's sick wife. Her role is thus fundamentally political: it provides her with a validated access to the palace and acts as a gesture of goodwill to the King. Her relationship with the women of the court provides her with information necessary to the safety of the mission. Further, her medical skill and political versatility are a means of overcoming the machinations of Fath-ud-Din who attempts to murder the British commander through the administration of poison. The murder attempt and Fath-ud-Din's further attempts to jeopardise the mission through persuading the British to sign an invalid treaty are further implicitly linked with Dick.[57] The personal truce between him and Georgia, like the political truce, is only superficial. Both North and Fath-ud-Din appear to accept the stance of their opponents, while really desiring to undermine it. The superior rationale and valour of the British is signified in their refusal to compromise honour by signing the invalid treaty. The extent of the Orientals' lack of honour has now been unveiled. Similarly, North's depreciation of Keeling's ability to cure the commander reveals his true prejudice: 'I wish we had a proper surgeon here ... a medical *man* ... I know that I would never let a lady doctor touch me if I was ill' (p.179). Georgia refuses to compromise her honour by

56 The religious elements of the text which justify the presence of Keeling in Ethiopia are both racist and ironic, for, as stated above, Ethiopia was largely a Christian nation. However, despite this, catholic missionaries did attempt to convert orthodox Christians to catholicism and protestant missionaries attempted to reform them. See, Zewde, *op.cit.*, pp.24-5.

57 The details concerning the invalid treaty are another clear rewrite of actual events: the invalid treaty in the text is one which has had the wording changed and the foresight of the British ensures that they have it translated and uncover the plot. Menelik II abrogated on an 1889 agreement with the Italians after the discovery of a vital change of wording in the Italian version which differed from the Amharic wording. The change in wording effectively made Ethiopia a protectorate of Italy: Menelik would never have agreed to this. Britain was among the first to state the agreement was valid and only Russia condemned it. See, Zewde, *op.cit.*, p.75.

accepting the now invalid truce between them: 'Thank you for the things you have been saying Major North - one conversation of this kind teaches more than months of ordinary conventional intercourse.' (p.181)

The Ethiopian Mission ultimately leaves Kubbet-Ul-Haj in possession of a valid treaty without loss of honour and without succumbing to the savagery of the 'infidel' attempt to undermine British civility. It also leaves Kubbet-Ul-Haj with a valid truce between Georgia and Dick who are now engaged. However, the links between the white male and the Oriental are continued; in both cases the acquisition of peace with honour is still only superficial. Before the mission can return to civilisation the incontrovertible nature of British civility, whatever the context, must be fully affirmed. The Ethiopian 'other' must be contained and controlled; its difference to white 'masculinity' reasserted; and, of necessity, the implied links between North and the Oriental 'heathen' must be negated.

The connections between North and the Oriental are for the most part implicit: as in the apparent acquisition of truces. However, in one sphere Dick's connection with what the text constructs as Oriental is more complex. Dick's difference to Fath-ud-Din and his cohorts in terms of his British honour is never in doubt: his courage, chivalrous nature, and willingness to sacrifice himself for his country save the mission. Simultaneously, his heroics enable the text to construct him as 'manly'. Yet it is the implied link between North and the 'east' which makes clear one reason *why* the text is so determined to construct Ethiopia in Orientalist terms: Ethiopia is required to be a perfidious, Islamic country precisely because the text needs to promote the (supposed) Oriental view of women in opposition to the Christian view of women, as a means of affirming the acceptability of the white 'Lady Doctor'.[58] Dick's views on 'Lady Doctors' are written as misguided precisely *because* they denote an Oriental perspective.

North's objections to Keeling's career are repeated throughout the text. Once they are engaged Georgia realises that the one thing that can come between them is her work. She is not prepared to sacrifice her profession even for Dick. Utilising her scientific skill and ingenuity Keeling attains the antidote to the poison administered to the commander by placing herself in danger tending the charge of the evil Khadija, who hates white people. During her stay at Khadija's fort, the latter

58 The other reason why the text constructs Ethiopia as Oriental has already been made clear: its fundamental racism.

attempts to manipulate Georgia by appealing to her love for Dick. Seeing through her deviousness, Georgia refuses to be manipulated and her foresight actually prevents the breakdown of the fragile peace and the outbreak of war. Her courage is then juxtaposed with Dick's imperious command via morse code to return to him that night: a command which she refuses to obey, putting her patient before her desire to see Dick. Consequently, North berates her for her unwomanly views on marriage and her profession and breaks off the engagement before collapsing. In a reversal of supreme irony the character who has earlier stated he would never be treated by a 'Lady Doctor' now finds himself attended on by Dr Keeling. His recovery and subsequent education at the hands of Lady Haigh then make clear the link between his views on women and those of the 'east'.

Early on in the text the white women are informed that in Ethiopia they will need to be veiled in keeping with 'eastern' custom. Jokes are made about the danger of Georgia going unveiled and finding herself the fifteenth wife of the King (yet another dig at Islam) and about her having to adopt, with the veil, 'the other dictates of Eastern etiquette ... which forbid a lady to speak to any man not of her immediate family' (p.67). Later in the text the superiority of the Christian marital model is again alluded to. The women whom Georgia visits in the King's harem are amazed at Christian white women's freedom. Georgia is saddened by *their* constricted status: under the control of their husbands; not even guaranteed that they will be the sole wife; forced to veil themselves in public; and forbidden discourse with men other than relatives. They are amazed that Georgia is free to marry whom she pleases and that she intends to marry at all when she does not have to. Also, of course, they are amazed at her profession. When Georgia attempts to explain that marriage to Dick will be different to their sorry lives they do not believe her. It is, thus, highly ironic that Dick holds views which in many ways accord with the Oriental version of marriage posited in the text: desiring to lead the household; expecting as his right that Georgia obey his wishes; not contemplating that he should consider her wishes; and perceiving his profession as inevitably leading him away from her but not expecting her to spend time from him. It is the text's ingenious link between the Oriental, outmoded view of woman and Dick's similar view which renders its construct of the 'Lady Doctor' acceptable. Given that Ethiopian/Oriental/Islamic culture has been depicted as uncivil, backward, devious, cunning, unchristian, how then can its treatment of women be endorsed? Thus, not only is the difference between 'east' (black) and 'west' (white) thoroughly inscribed

in the text but so is the difference between Christian, white notions of womanhood and Oriental/ Islamic, black notions of womanhood.

Although no explicit mention is made of this link between Dick and the 'alien' culture, the foregrounding of a difference between 'east' and 'west' prior to Lady Haigh's gleeful rejoicing 'to find Dick delivered into her hands in this teachable spirit' (p.392) implies one. Dick, says Lady Haigh 'would have made an ideal husband in the days when it was considered quite the proper thing for a gentleman to correct his wife with a stick' (p.394). Undoubtedly this would produce for him the submissive wife he seems to want, but '[t]he fact is, you would wish to marry a clever woman, only she must be willing to let herself be treated as a fool' (p.395). The only way for Dick to attain peace with honour is to '[a]llow her the freedom you claim for yourself - in fact you must allow it if you mean to marry Georgia Keeling. She will be yours heart and soul, but a certain portion of her time and interest she will always give to her work' (p.396). It cannot be said that Dick is shown to learn his lesson over well: just prior to his reconciliation with Georgia he is still saying to Lady Haigh '[d]o you really think that this sort of thing is meant for women?' (p.397) Nonetheless, Dick does accept defeat: 'I told you to make your conditions, and as I said before, I am prepared to accept them abjectly. Do you know, Georgie, that when I was at Rahmat-Ullah it was hinted to me that I might be made assistant political agent when they establish the agency at Iskandarbagh? How would you like that?' (p.401)

The alliance of the hero and heroine at the close of the text aligns the political, religious, imperial and personal in its affirmation of the 'Lady Doctor'. Keeling will work amongst women while Dick acts as a political agent. Both will serve the empire. Thus, while the defeat of the Islamic plot against the British signifies the perpetual inferiority of the Oriental (as well as the perpetual need to control him), the defeat of Dick's views on womanliness signifies his alliance with British superiority. The apparently Oriental element of his character which failed to perceive the Christian nature of Keeling's work is overthrown. British supremacy in the text thus stems from a superior rationale, civility, honour, Christian faith, and qualities of courage and forbearance. While these elements are threatened by travel into a land of unknown qualities they are upheld as innate, as inherently British, qualities which operate masterfully not just within conventional social circumstances but within all spheres. On the other hand, North's perspective of the female is shown to be dependent upon conditioning and social conventions; it cannot be upheld because it is not based on innate truth. In some ways then, the

text does offer a rather more challenging version of the 'Lady Doctor' than that in *New Grooves*, for Keeling is throughout an individual, autonomous, self-reliant, and reasoned; while Dick's failure to endorse her career questions the validity of male rationale. Yet the text is only able to construct the 'Lady Doctor' in such positive terms by creating an alternative difference to that of gender; by writing the Oriental instead of womanhood as unindividual; and by propagating a racist ideology.

4.3 The 'Girton Girl' at College

In both *New Grooves* and *Peace with Honour* the woman doctor is shown aiding other women. While this could denote a culture of female bonding, in both texts aiding other women conveniently serves to uphold (white) male hegemony: in the former text in relation to the female body as a site of potential (sexual) impropriety; in the latter in relation to imperialism. A similar trend is discernible in acceptable constructs of the 'Girton Girl', both in fictional and non-fictional texts. The general higher education of women was often shown to result in a female sub-culture which enabled women to learn from each other and to go on to aid other, often working-class, women or girls. However, in the very process of acquiring the knowledge which enabled women graduates to go on to do useful work, they were situated in a context which was seen as highly suspicious: an all-female, adult community. Misconceptions about the lifestyle of women undergraduates and a common belief in their rejection of traditional womanly duties were an important element of negative constructions of college women. What could be more unnatural than a group of young women foregoing the pleasures of society to incarcerate themselves in an all-female community, pouring over their books and leading an unhealthy lifestyle which spoiled them for marriage and motherhood? In opposition to this version of the life of a 'Girton Girl', campaigners and students themselves were quick to point to the normalcy of college life for women, typically appropriating the terminology of mainstream reactionary ideology to demonstrate the beneficial effects on women that higher education brought.

By the 1880s and 1890s a plethora of periodical articles, either by journalists visiting the colleges, or by women undergraduates themselves, strove to demonstrate the healthy, enhancing and beneficial effects of a college lifestyle. Exaggerated negative portraits of college life and women students were self-consciously contradicted by worthy accounts of busy and useful communities. That falsified versions of collegiate life were still thought to prevail in the public consciousness is apparent from the determined way in which such accounts refute populist and mythical conceptions of the 'Girton Girl's' daily habits. 'A Newnham

Student' giving an account of 'Newnham College from Within', for example, states that 'the most curious ignorance exists as to the nature of the institution which is ... condemned unheard'.[59] She then offers the reader examples of the ludicrous questions she has been asked about her 'unconventional' life style: are her rooms next to her brothers? (read, are the colleges a den of iniquity?); what time is lights out? (read, isn't college really a glorified boarding school?); do the students take a vow? - 'a number of women residing together could suggest nothing but the idea of a convent or sisterhood'.[60] Similarly, '[a]n ex-Girtonian' notes that 'there still exist some cautious beings who regard a college young lady with a sort of nervous dread, as being stamped for life with the seal of learning and undesirability'.[61] It is not just the women students who note the disparity between the popular image of the diseased student and her genuine counterpart. A journalist visiting Girton in 1887 begins by stating that the visit is intended to see if the students are overworked or under mental strain. She finds instead 'simple and in earnest' students.[62] Importantly, she notes that the aim of the college is not 'to raise them above their proper sphere, as women, by ... competing with men' but on the contrary to maintain 'them in all the delicacy and refinement of true womanhood, so to widen the field of their labours ... to fit them for life's duties ... the better to fulfil them'.[63]

Periodical accounts of women's colleges, thus, often transformed them from centres of female power into centres of womanly duty. Nonetheless, underlying attempts to offset negative publicity, detailed descriptions of daily life at university by women students indicate the potential liberation they attained. Importantly, a dominant theme in reminiscences of Victorian women students is the potential college offered them for the development of individuality: the chance to perceive female identity not in relation to family duties and prevailing cultural expectations of a marital future but in terms of individual ambitions. At its simplest level this is obvious from the repeated allusions student accounts make to 'Sporting the Oak' to ensure no intrusion of their private space. Often the link between private space and individuality is made explicit. In 'Life at Girton', for example, '[a] Girtonian' states that college 'affords free scope for the recognition and development of

---

59 Eva Knatchbull-Hugessen, 'Newnham College from Within', *Nineteenth Century*, 21, (6/1887), 843.

60 *ibid.*

61 'An Ex-Girtonian', 'Girton College', *The Idler*, 5, (6/1894), 532.

62 M.F. Donaldson, 'A Day at Girton College', *Lady's World*, Annual Volume, (1887), 143.

63 *ibid.*

individuality'.[64] Moreover, this freedom, she states, is effected within a community where a woman 'for the first time takes a recognised place and has definite duties to perform ... her sphere of action is widened, and she gains an influence and place in a community, which she has never consciously possessed before'.[65] This Girtonian is quick to point out that the development of individuality within a community is no paradox; rather the former derives from the latter:

> It would seem as if independence were sacrificed, and individuality swamped, rather than increased by a common life ... yet the constraint of family custom and habits ... is thrown off. At college, no one expects, or takes it for granted, that a woman will speak or act in such-and-such a manner, and to such-and-such purpose; every one [sic] is free to develop her own point of view ... This not only leaves us free to develop our own individuality, but also lends us a pleasant sense of importance; we are no longer mere parts - excrescences ... of a family.[66]

It is the private sitting-rooms provided for each student, she continues, which most foster 'real independence and individuality'.[67]

This sense of a site where individuality could be fostered yet community friendships developed is prevalent. Helena Swanwick, writing in the 1930s of her time at Girton, tells of a social life that 'to me was so intoxicating ... I was too excited to eat or sleep properly. To begin with, I now had a study as well as a bedroom to myself'.[68] She goes on to relate, with humour, her mother's appalled reaction at the sight of her study bedroom; a room which thrilled Swanwick but which led her mother to say with tears in her eyes that she would remove her daughter from this dreadful place. Her time at Girton, as with the Girtonian above, offered not only community life but a realisation of her former lack of space: 'I did not know till then how much I had suffered from the incessant interruptions of my home life.'[69] One former Oxford student states quite simply 'I always reckon my life to have begun in 1890, the year in which I went to Lady Margaret Hall' because of '[t]he very fact of

---

64 'A Girtonian', 'Life at Girton', *Woman's World*, Annual Volume, (1889), 604.

65 *ibid.*, 605.

66 *ibid.*

67 *ibid.*, 606. This was a particular feature of Girton. For a discussion of the differences between conditions at the women's colleges, see chapter 4 in Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920*, London 1985.

68 Helena M. Swanwick, *I Have Been Young*, London 1935, p.117.

69 Swanwick, *ibid.*, p.118.

having a room of one's own, a place where one not only could work, but was expected to work, the possibility of independence, of arranging one's time for oneself, of getting up and going to bed according to one's own ideas and not those of others made each day an adventure and a joy'.[70]

The overriding benefit of college life for most Victorian women students who relate or recollect their experiences was thus said to be the existence of a female community where the development of individuality was not frowned upon. In other words, the primary benefit was that women students found themselves in a space where their identity was not perceived purely in relation to male controlled institutions such as the family. Given this emphasis upon an apparently female-centred and controlled space it is at first surprising to note that Victorian fictional accounts of college women which present female characters actually at college (rather than before or after) proliferated alongside periodical recollections/accounts by students and journalists. However, relatively few of these novels either locate the majority of the text during term time or focus the majority of it on the experience of being within the college itself. In order to avoid the narrative 'problems' which might arise if forced to deal primarily with female to female relationships privileged over female to male relationships, college life tends to become a backdrop to a conventional progression towards marriage: sparse details, for example, are given about college societies to remind the reader of the text's location or to mock the aspirations of the female students.[71]

One exception is Alice Stronach's *A Newnham Friendship* (1901).[72] Like the recollections and periodical accounts referred to above, it refers to the intoxicating combination of having a room of one's own within a community which encourages rather than mocks learning and which positively demands women-only social activity rather than debarring it. Early on in the text this combination is linked with

---

70 Eleanor C. Lodge, (ed. by Janet Spens due to Lodge's death prior to publication), *Terms and Vacations*, London 1938, p.41.

71 Novels by women which contain sections set in women's colleges include Emily Cox's *Courtship and Chemicals*, London n.d. [1898?] set in Newnham; a series of novels by 'Alan St Aubyn' [Frances Marshall], set in Newnham, including *The Junior Dean*, London 1891, *The Master of St Benedict's* London 1893, and *A Proctor's Wooing*, London 1897; and Mary Pendered's, *Dust and Laurels: A Study in Nineteenth Century Womanhood*, London 1893, partly set in Somerville.

72 Alice Stronach attended Newnham for one year and the details given of college societies are accurate; references to her contemporaries at Newnham are barely disguised.

control. In the general humdrum of the return to college, when rules are not yet enforced, the narrator informs us that '[t]he doors of most of the snug little study bedrooms stood hospitably open, and their owners, as they unpacked and arranged their treasures, seemed to welcome rather than resent friendly intrusion'.[73] The fact that the 'owners' of the rooms can choose to control their space by both colonising it with their own possessions and by opening or shutting their doors ensures that the border between the benefits of individual isolation and the equal benefits of communing with other students can be easily traversed.

The comparison drawn between the study-bedroom of the returning student, Betty Leslie, and that of the fresher, Elspeth Macleod, further emphasises the possibility of transforming individual space into both an expression of identity and a place of shared community. Unpacking in the presence of her friends, Betty has a copy of a Rossetti painting, a marble copy of the Venus de Milo, a silk-shaded lamp, rugs on the floor, and silk cushions. All of these both denote her wealthy background and make her room 'the pretty den that spelt home to her' (p.12). In comparison, 'in the room just over Betty's' (p.19) Eppie 'was busy unpacking her books and trying to give her little study-bedroom something of a home-like air' (p.19). Significantly, the external appearance of her unhomely room is linked by Eppie with the fear that Newnham, like the room, will disappoint, then to the thought that 'at least there will be quiet for work, with none of the many interruptions and distractions of the old life' (pp.19-20). Eppie concludes her ruminations by taking out her Greek lexicon and working on 'a difficult passage of the *Phaedo*' (p.19). Below her, Betty is entertaining with a 'cocoa'. Through the instigation of Carol Martin, Eppie is shown the possibilities of traversing the boundary between individualism and community. Taken to the 'cocoa', Eppie delights in the 'gay chatter' (p.24) of books, travel, politics and university gossip. She acknowledges to herself her desire for a friend and goes to bed a changed girl. All in one evening!

This early depiction of space and the borderline between privacy and community is referred to haphazardly in the part of the text set in the college: there are references to 'Sporting the Oak'; descriptions of private discussions between women in their study bedrooms; and further references to 'cocoas'. Significantly, the idea of female space is extended to include the space created by the college itself

73 Alice Stronach, *A Newnham Friendship*, London, 1901, p.10. All further quotations are from this edition and will be referred to in the main text by page number.

where students share meals together, and exchange ideas both through their formal learning and through the societies which proliferate there. The students also have a shared 'language'. While much of this 'language' comprises words familiar within any Oxbridge context ('shop', 'Tripee'), some of it is specific to the Newnham of the text.[74] On her arrival at the college, Eppie finds herself bemused at terms such as the Long Grind, the J.P.'s, the V.P. and the Farmyard. The ability to understand the language of the community denotes one an insider and an integrated member of that community; and provides a shared means of expressing experiences at variance with those of the majority of women.

The text, then, apparently offers a representation of a space within which female learning and leisure can operate partially free from the constrictions of the external world. However, the notion of space as something that leads to liberation and the development of individuality is more problematic than this. Private female space (a women's college, a study bedroom) is still, to a degree, controlled by the 'external' patriarchal hegemony. In the examples given above, both from recollections, periodical articles and Stronach's text, the idea of female space within a community of learning appears to suggest that college life permitted women to inscribe themselves in radically different ways from those in which women were typically inscribed in the external world; or indeed the ways in which women who adhered to 'typical' gender roles were inscribed. In some ways it did. Yet the very creation of a marginalised female-only space which encouraged the development of female individuality could not obliterate the central power structures which made its creation necessary; and could not escape the long arm of power which continued to intrude on it. This is apparent in Stronach's fictional text. For example, the women create a college House of Commons on the same lines as the real one, except that theirs is not only fully female but also rather more radical, with a Government which 'vied with the Opposition in its support of legislation that was distinctly socialistic' (p.139). Yet the limits of a marginalised female sub-culture which denotes the capability of women while simultaneously reminding them of their exclusion from centralised power systems are apparent: 'sometimes a crushing sense that it was only play would overcome them, and they longed for a chance of a real political encounter' (p.140). The ambiguity of the power derived from an all-female private space, then, is that it is only necessary to create a marginalised alternative to the mainstream when women are rendered powerless within dominant ideologies.

---

74 Stronach's use of these terms is also accurate.

Further, even within that marginalised space, the internalisation of ideological givens remains not only hard to escape from but, of necessity, something to be reinforced. Thus, for example, Olive Langley, the carefree gadabout is determined to 'get all the fun she could' (p.65) out of being at Newnham through visiting King's and Clare's to see (male) relatives. Yet she is shocked when she attends a chaperoned tea party to find men of a dubious character there and Newnham girls flirting: 'Carol, it's a disgrace to the college!' (p.80), she says indignantly. Likewise, in the comparisons made between Betty's and Eppie's study-rooms it is obvious that Betty's decoration of her room, while denoting the benefits of having a room of one's own, also indicates that the rooms are something to be domesticised; to be made into a home: just how far the college women in the text have freed themselves from the typical polarity which denotes their arena domestic and private comes into question. Moreover, the students themselves do not need to be policed by a vigilant patriarchy: their internalisation of its rules ensures that they police themselves. Thus, potentially radical behaviour (attendance at college) is always tempered by an insistence on modest womanhood. Indeed, potentially radical behaviour (attendance at college) becomes a means in itself of enhancing womanhood, and thus renders a college education acceptable.

This desire to retain approval and acceptability by emphasising modest womanhood is also prevalent in non-fictional accounts of college life. In 'An Interior view of Girton', Eliza Minturn states that Girton students 'never seem to regard themselves as the exponents of a cause ... they are simple-hearted English girls and women doing work for its own sake'.[75] Their 'dress and manners', says Minturn, 'are those of English girls of their class ... [i]f one student threatens some eccentricity, there is a general outcry by the others'.[76] Most importantly, 'Girton students ... are ... much too true to their English nationality to profess any contempt for marriage'.[77] A student from L.M.H., writing in the twentieth century, notes with approval that 'it would have been impossible to grow up a feminist' at the college.[78] Such disclaimers were not merely gambits for approval, however.

The conflict between the aspirations and learning of college women and those of the majority of women in their society led to anxiety about their own identity; what were they to measure their womanhood against? In the process of

75 E.T.M., [Eliza Theodora Mintum], *An Interior View of Girton College, Cambridge*, London 1876, p.7.

76 *ibid.*, p.12.

77 *ibid.*

78 Courtney, *An Oxford Portrait Gallery*, London 1931, p.243.

defining the liberation that college life could potentially offer, the woman student was invariably reimprisoned within traditional constructs by a need to indicate the 'normalcy' of her clearly abnormal position (that is, as a single woman transferred from the family into an academic community/family). In order to be 'acceptable', in the process of becoming 'different' (that is developing individuality) that very difference had to be denied and the college woman's sameness to others of her gender group had to be reaffirmed. Thus, in non-fictional accounts of college life, alongside exuberance about opportunities for the freedom to learn, comes an insistence on the degree of (constrictive) propriety upheld within their college communities. Repeatedly, Victorian women students tell of the chaperone system, the rules about which part of town they may or may not visit, and the (male) visitors they may and may not receive: this is all intended to emphasise a 'family' style preservation of female modesty. Interestingly, the ambivalence of such descriptions of both liberation and approved restriction is sometimes exposed in some later, twentieth century, recollections. A wry resistance to, sometimes rebellion against, the rules and regulations which governed their college lives is now referred to: 'Our social rules were rather strict, and some of them were a little absurd. We might walk alone on the outskirts of Oxford, but only two together in the High or the Broad.'[79] Lilian Faithfull, writing in 1924 of her Somerville experiences, notes the exuberance shown by L.M.H. students after they won an intercollegiate hockey match against Somerville: following male tradition, 'a bonfire [was lit] in the garden, with the result that hockey had been forbidden for the ensuing term'.[80] Students felt restricted by having to go out in pairs 'even a dash into town to buy a cake involved the search for a companion or else the burden of an uneasy conscience - a burden which I am afraid we often managed to bear with considerable equanimity'.[81]

These conflicts and ambivalences surrounding the uneasy relationship between a private marginalised female space within a male controlled culture, surrounding the uneasy relationship between a perceived, promoted individuality with a denial of difference, are also visible in the relationships between college women themselves. College life for women in the Victorian period clearly offered them, perhaps for the first time, a context in which intimate and prolonged adult relationships with other women could be not only fostered but, to a degree,

79 Courtney, *Recollected in Tranquillity*, London 1926, p.101.

80 Lilian Faithfull, *In the House of My Pilgrimage*, London 1924, p.62.

81 Lodge, 'Growth, 1890-1922', in Bailey (ed.), *Lady Margaret Hall: A Short History*, London 1923, p.62.

approved of. An anonymous writer in the *Leisure Hour*, for example, notes that Girton provides students with an opportunity to form 'friendships such as women seldom make'.[82] Yet, here too, there were limitations. The affirming nature of adult female friendship within a female community was potentially a repudiation of the primacy of marriage extolled within the wider community. Therefore, again, it needed justification in terms that made it acceptable: invariably these terms denoted appropriate female friendship as an instrument for the enhancement of the cultural order. Alongside this, questions arose concerning what *was* appropriate: could a female-only environment which fostered female to female relationships, even when inscribing these friendships in terms of service, be denoted as acceptable? That women students were aware, at least on a sub-conscious level, of the freedom and danger of friendships is apparent in Eleanor Lodge's description of a visit to L.M.H. Prior to her entrance as a student, Lodge watched a performance of a play written by a student at the college. She describes it thus:

> Annie Sellar ... in tweeds and smoking a cigarette ... was the mannish young woman who got to a land without any men, was taken for one, and promptly fallen in love with by all the young ladies of the place. It turned out to be a nightmare and had the moral effect of stopping evil habits.[83]

That this is a thinly veiled displacement of anxiety generated by awareness of their anomalous position seems obvious. Exactly *what* evil habits are not detailed but it takes little cognisance to guess! The undertone of intimacy and consequent guilt evoked by this description point to the precarious nature of female to female relationships within environments at once governed by strict codes of modest behaviour yet simultaneously cultural icons of radicalism and perceived spaces of liberation. As Martha Vicinus has suggested, women students and graduates were forced to negotiate a safe path through the contradictions, ambivalences, restrictions, and potential freedoms of college life which confused the public and the private, the individual and the communal, the dependent and the independent. Vicinus notes that '[a] partial solution to these contradictions was found in close friendships', yet, as Lodge inadvertently reveals, and as Vicinus recounts in detail,

---

82 Anon., 'Girton College', *Leisure Hour*, 25, (11/1876), 717.

83 Lodge, *Terms and Vacations*, p.34.

these friendships themselves created further contradictions and ambivalences by virtue of their homosocial/erotic undertones.[84]

A Newnham Friendship is interesting, in this respect, for its depiction of female friendship is on one level a simple strategy for detailing the ways in which college life can lead women towards fulfilling a modest, womanly role.[85] The text charts an apparently safe path through a variety of 'good' and 'bad' friendships between women and women; and, to a much lesser degree, between women and men; with the 'good' emphasising service, loyalty, trust and propriety, and the 'bad' denoting selfishness and hints of sexual impropriety. Female to female friendship in the text is seen to have the potential to work towards the enhancement of the cultural order. Yet the 'good' friendships, while promoting modest behaviour, also illicitly offer an innocent homosocial, if not homoerotic, undertone.

In part, female friendship in the text is dealt with in the style typical in school-girl stories of the period. Thus, the 'good' friendship between Carol and Betty is placed in jeopardy by Betty's gravitation towards Isabel Vane and the latter's introduction of Betty to Ralph Lynn, an undergraduate rake. The narrator makes it explicit that Isabel has no concept of genuine friendship on several occasions. Isabel is beautiful and clever but has a more insidious quality: she has the power to draw towards herself female admirers. Significantly, the narrative denotes its disapproval of this by comparing her admirers at Newnham to the girls over whom she exerted influence at school. This is not appropriate friendship but an ability to evoke an unhealthy 'pash'. Isabel uses this gift of attraction to surround herself 'with a little band of devoted admirers, ready to run at her bidding and to perform the many services required of them' (p.67).

When Betty falls prey to Isabel's charms, Olive notes that '[s]he has wanted Betty for a long time to act as foil to her beauty' (p.64). This note of possession is clearly a negative factor in Isabel's acquisition of 'friends'. Thus, although Carol 'determined that, if Betty was to go, it should not be without an effort on her part to win her old friend back again' (p.68), this determination is carefully placed in the context of a narrative which has already positioned Carol's moral qualities in opposition to Isabel's egotism. Carol's 'nature ... was to give rather than to require service and help from her fellows' (p.67). It is interesting that the notion of service at

---

84 Vicinus, ' "One Life to Stand Beside Me": Emotional Conflicts in First-Generation College Women in England', *Feminist Review*, 8, no. 3, (Fall 1982), 603. See also her chapter on women's colleges in *Independent Women.*

85 The main protagonists end up in a settlement. See p.174 below.

the college (later extended to after-college life) is linked with sexual propriety. Under the influence of Isabel, Betty begins to read contemporary French fiction (a common signifier in Victorian novels of sexual impropriety) and mocks Carol's shocked prudery on discovering this. She is also seen 'flirting outrageously' (p.83). Betty is saved from Isabel by the convenient illness and death of her father which teaches her the genuine nature of female friendship; this in turn leads her to devote her life to philanthropy rather than wealthy living! In this sense, appropriate female friendships in the text are seen to encourage a womanliness which is modest, unselfish and promotes 'service' in the public world.

The appropriate nature of 'good' female to female friendship is also subjected to the tests and trials typical in school-girl stories. For example, the crisis in Carol's and Eppie's friendship, ostensibly caused by Isabel's forging of Eppie's satirical verses, is really a test of loyalty and trust. Also in keeping with school-girl differentiations between appropriate and inappropriate female friendship is Carol's repudiation of the notion of possessing female friends that is apparent in Isabel's 'wooing' of Betty. The narrator tells us that Carol and Eppie's relationship has 'deepened to one of those rare friendships that outlast school or college, and endure the test of time' (p.51). While Eppie has at first held back, 'over-sensitive' (p.51) of 'poaching on Betty's preserves' (p.51), Carol scotches this straight away: 'What would be the use of college life if we were to get ourselves absorbed by exclusive friendships? Isn't it our boast that we have outgrown the ways of school-girls? Of course one may have one's special chum, but that needn't mean being always with her.'(p.51)

Thus, acceptable, adult female to female friendship distinguishes itself from the immature and unacceptable connotations of the unhealthy school-girl style 'pash'. This in itself denotes an awareness of the possible dangers/misinterpretations in/about female to female friendship. Moreover, the relationship between Eppie and Carol is not only privileged over their other relationships but itself becomes a site of confused semi-erotic transactions. For the majority of the novel this is evoked through the innocent, yet homoerotic, touch which hovers on the borderline between the maternal, the sisterly and the lover-like. Vicinus, again, in her writing on Constance Maynard and her friendships with women, details the acting out of Maynard's 'mother-lover' roles, with the objects of Maynard's love being positioned as both daughters and wives.[86] In other words, as

86 Vicinus, ' "One Life to Stand Beside Me" ', *op.cit.*, 608-622.

Vicinus suggests, female to female friendships were often described as, and/or based on, a replication of both domestic and heterosexual male to female models of relationships, for '[h]owever "new" they may have been, they [women] were still immersed in old ideologies and patterns'.[87] The homoerotic nature of Maynard's relationships as detailed in private journals is very pronounced. Stronach's 'public' (ie published) text does not offer by any means such a complicated or (however innocently) sexualised version of the ways in which late-Victorian college women negotiated their friendships. Nonetheless, while promoting college and female friendship as the basis for female service to society, the ellipsis created by the absence of both family and men is filled in the text by a focus on Carol as the centre of attraction; as the mother, sister, lover-like object of adoration; and on Carol as the woman who negotiates a path which encompasses private female friendship, public service, a repudiation of marriage, and a final *implied* acceptance of her marital ending: that is, a path which in itself embodies the confused, potentially liberating, and ambivalent choices facing the 'acceptable' 'Girton Girl'.

The construction of Carol as a mother substitute is apparent from the start of the novel. The narrator describes how at the end of the 'cocoa' Betty throws herself at Carol's feet and leans 'her fluffy hair and soft cheek against Carol's knee' (pp.27-8). As she gets up to go, Carol stoops and kisses 'Betty's flushed cheeks tenderly, and la[ys] her hand a moment on the halo of golden hair' (p.28). A further maternal physical touch is evoked in a later scene between Carol and Betty, where Betty has succumbed to a headache: 'Carol's voice was very tender as she bent down and lightly stroked the fluffy fair hair that circled Betty's forehead like a halo.' (p.69) The motherly nature of Carol's tenderness is further emphasised in her wise decision not to nag her 'daughter' about her reading habits but to gently guide her away from the topic in order to interest her in a more suitable one. However, this positioning of Carol as 'mother' is juxtaposed with a positioning of her body as a site of attraction. The first detailed description of her is one which focuses on the fascination of her appearance. Betty 'gave herself up to the pleasure of watching Carol as she moved about the room' (p.15) for '[t]here was something peculiarly fascinating in the way ... [she] walked' (p.15). Admittedly, this is due also to the character that emanates from her and admittedly the narrator is careful to tell us that while her face is one of a leader it is also womanly, tender, and lovable. Nonetheless, Carol's smile her friends 'declared to be as potent as witchcraft in making people do what she

87 *ibid.*, 622.

wanted' (p.16). This interest in Carol's face is shared by Eppie on her first evening at college. Carol is situated as the object of Eppie's gaze - '[a]gain and again her gaze wandered to ... where Carol sat ... [h]er face ... had an indescribable fascination for lonely Elspeth' (pp.25-26). That night, in unconscious irony, the narrator tells us that Carol's 'dreams were haunted by the wistful eyes of the little Highland girl' (p.28).

In the relationship between Eppie and Carol, unlike that between Betty and Carol, the maternal is combined with the sisterly and the lover-like. Eppie's initial fascination with Carol develops into an adoration and '[e]verything that concerned Carol had the keenest interest for her [Eppie] ... she had begun to repay her new friend's tender protecting affection by the fervent, loyal love that ... was part of her Celtic heritage' (p.46). Carol takes to visiting Eppie's room each night to tuck her into bed and take away her light. This maternal/erotic nurturing is succeeded by the next progression in the 'courtship' game: the touch. Although it is indicated throughout that Carol is the moral touchstone of the text, significantly, Eppie is party to Carol's confidences. Invited to Carol's room to hear why her friend is distressed, Eppie is greeted with the words '[t]hat's right. I want you and only you tonight' (p. 57). After drinking their cocoa in silence, Carol says: ' "I've been wondering what it is in you that draws one's secrets out of one; why I should tell you, whom I've known for only a few weeks, what even Betty doesn't know." Eppie was silent, but, drawing Carol's hand into hers, she held it prisoner.' (p.57) After telling her story 'Carol looked up, and smiling through her tears, she stooped and kissed Eppie's forehead. "dear little mother confessor! It has done me good to tell you" ' (p.62). The nature of these physical moments is clearly innocent yet retains an element of the erotic; this is furthered by the way in which Eppie and Carol's feelings are expressed in language which evokes the terminology of female to male attraction. This becomes even more obvious in relation to a former Newnham student, Vi Maynard.

Vi is constructed in the text through the comments of the characters and the narrator not through her actual appearance. She is quite clearly intended to demonstrate that a college education leads a woman to go on to fulfil her womanly duties. However, if Carol is the maternal, sororal, lover-like object of adoration within Newnham, Vi is the larger than life absent mother-sister-lover, revered and admired for her noble service to society. Anticipating her visit to the college, Carol tells Eppie some of her history; after this 'Carol's good-night kiss was all the more tender because of the old memories that had been conjured up' (p.100). Vi is not a

realised threat to Eppie's pre-eminence with Carol. Nonetheless after her visit both Carol and Eppie can only describe the encounter and their feelings in a mode which replicates female to male (sexual/possessive) relationships. 'Isn't she just splendid? I warned you you'd fall in love with Vi at once. Confess you have!' (p.101), says Carol. Eppie responds 'demurely' (p.101), with a compliment for Carol herself. Vi is 'the loveliest and most lovable woman I have ever seen - present company ... excepted' (p.101). Yet 'Carol was so carried away by her enthusiasm that the compliment was lost on her' (p.101). Eppie displays symptoms of jealousy described in terminology distinctly lover-like in tone:

> With Vi Maynard for a friend, how could Carol care for her, Eppie? She could only be a stop-gap until the close of Carol's college career brought her and Vi together again. Yet even while she thought this, Eppie reproached herself for questioning her friend's loyalty and constancy. She wasn't going to be jealous; moreover, hadn't she herself fallen a victim to Vi Maynard's charm? (pp.101-2)

Of course, ultimately, the 'threat' to Eppie's and Carol's friendship comes not from another woman but from a man. Yet, interestingly, however much this is expected, the text holds out until the closing pages before it allows itself to reach this conclusion, and even then it implies it rather than detailing it. Instead, we are offered the unrealised possibility that the pre-eminence of female to female friendship and service to other women will supersede male to female relations. That this is a possibility, albeit unrealised, is pointed to by the fact that only three named male characters actually appear in the entire text, and even they form a very minor part of the narrative. Ralph is an out and out rake; Phil Martin (Carol's brother) has fled the country ashamed of his caddish behaviour; and Edward Carew is immature, fritters his time away, and lacks a Godly understanding of his need to serve his country. The opportunities for romantic alliances are thus somewhat limited. Instead, the majority of the text focuses on the modes in which an all-female community is a rite of passage, an arena which befits women to go out into society to serve it by serving others. It is important that within this all-female arena female to male (sexual) liaisons are set aside *for a limited time*. Carol herself repudiates marriage, rejecting Ted because he is a boy not a man and because 'I don't intend to marry. I have never thought of it as a possibility' (p.120). Her earlier reaction to Betty's flirtation with Ralph is to dismiss it: 'I'm afraid it won't do to interfere. As the dear old Principal said when Cynthia came back engaged after the Long - don't you

remember? "My dears we shall just take no notice of it, and perhaps it will all blow past." ' (p.84)

Female to male liaisons cannot be allowed to intrude on the female space created by the college precisely because the text retains the acceptability of college education for women by demonstrating how that education itself helps women fulfil their philanthropic duty. In order to justify the acceptability of the female community created at Newnham the novel insists on the importance of academic work as preparation for a future life of public service. Unusually, it emphasies the academic nature of the work carried out in the college by trying to create a sense of a working academic community which takes study seriously. When Eppie arrives the text gives us a detailed description of her introduction to the kind of classical study she will undertake, while the announcement of 'Pippa' coming out above the mathematics senior wrangler is described as 'an honour greater than Newnham in her wildest hopes had dared to dream of' (p.201).[88] While such obvious declarations of the importance of female education provide a welcome change from the texts previously discussed, this insistence on academic learning is typically related to how it may be used for enhancing womanly duty. Thus, when Eppie feels 'what waste of time and energy' academic work is and longs 'to help men and women and little children to get their chance, to raise those who have fallen, to make the world easier for the feeble and downtrodden' (pp. 102, 103), Carol is ready with a reply: 'we must be drilled and disciplined ... the privilege of having been here, of all these years of quiet study and preparation for life's work, increases our responsibilities ... Newnham expects every woman to do her duty'(p.103). There is nothing challenging in this but nonetheless ambivalences arise: if women are to be fitted for public service then what of their place in the private domesticated sphere? If a 'Girton Girl' is to be made acceptable because her studies further her ability to traverse the boundary between the public and the private, then what of marriage? The crossing of these boundaries by women students is pointed to in both Carol's apparently ambivalent reaction to the thought of marriage and in her gift for public speaking.

Throughout the novel, for both the reader and the Newnham students, Carol remains the focus for the alternative routes women might take. Thus, Olive and Eppie discuss Ted's marriage proposal to her and wonder whether she will ever accept him, knowing that for Carol 'her work is always uppermost. She has such

88 This is a reference to Phillipa Fawcett's achievement in coming out as the senior wrangler in 1890.

high ideals of life, of leaving the world better and happier for her presence in it' (p.124). That Carol is fired by her desire to rid the world of injustice is apparent in her flouting of womanly convention at a political meeting in the town hall. Ironically, the description of this meeting comes immediately after the description of the college House of Commons which the narrator has told us provided the students with 'an experience in speaking that was later to be useful to many who were then unconsciously training for public work' (p.139); and which leaves the women frustrated that their debates are only play. At the public meeting Carol is unable to restrain herself, Olive tries to check her in vain, but Carol arises and speaks: 'There was a moment of dead silence. A woman had spoken in public, and a Cambridge audience required time to recover its breath.' (p.145) This is a precursor to Carol's later 'political' work: we are told that she becomes the best female speaker of the day but are never offered a detailed example of her public work. It is important that this latter section of the text is elliptical and short in comparison with what has come before. Throughout the text the inscription of the 'Girton Girls' has emphasised renouncing personal ambition for service to society (Eppie); academic attainment for public service (Carol); and female friendship as beneficial to future life and work. In fact, after-college life for these women is centred on another all-female community: the settlement.

Vicinus states that while Girton's tradition centred on women competing with men in public life, Newnham and L.M.H. were more active in the Women's University Settlement in Southwark. She notes that '[s]ettlement houses attracted women who wished to help other women to fulfil themselves as women without competing directly with men'.[89] Settlements were acceptable compromises, providing a further space where individuality and community could dovetail, and where public service could be carried out in a form of the private domain. Settlement work for college women also clearly provided them with a means of asserting their 'feminine' inclination to philanthropy. In Stronach's text, Olive, Eppie, Betty and Carol all end up in an east-end settlement house helping the poor. While Eppie has a post in a pupil-teacher training centre and Carol teaches in a high school and speaks in public we see neither of them in this context but only in the settlement. It is while at the settlement that Carol must confront the consequences

89 Vicinus, *Independent Women*, p.222. Bailey, in *op.cit.*, notes that Somerville, Girton and Newnham founded this settlement in 1887 and that L.M.H. supported it but opened its own settlement in 1897.

of her college education and public work on her future marital status. Contemplating Ted's proposal she decides '[s]he would not yield, would not let her life, her work, be spoiled by this folly. She had no time now to think of love, and marriage was not in her scheme of life' (p.285). Importantly, she takes comfort from the fact that '[a]t least - there will be Eppie. Eppie will never marry ... [t]here will be Eppie to help and to scold and take care of' (p.258). There is the implication, then, that female friendships will accord Carol and Eppie an alternative pathway to marriage.[90] In fact, the text has already implicated that it is Eppie, who is not accorded a husband in the text, who understands the *genuine* nature of woman's duty.

Much earlier on in the novel Eppie has wondered 'whether she [Carol] was to be one of those women who, seeking independence, pay a heavy price for it in happiness and home, or whether, after many years she would join hands with Teddy' (p.125). Importantly, it is Eppie who points out to Carol that 'our work ... our independence, our comradeships even, are all very well for a time, but not for always. And they cannot complete us' (p.285). She exhorts Carol to '[m]arry, have children, know the highest happiness that life can give a woman. Your work - you need not give that up' (p.285). This is genuine friendship indeed, '[f]or Carol's marriage would mean the loss, or at least the lessening, of the one great friendship of her life - loss and a great loneliness. Why didn't Carol see this - see that Eppie, in pleading for Ted, was pleading against her own interests?' (p.286) While Carol fights 'her last battle with herself, her love of independence, her pride, her self-sufficiency' (p.287), Eppie teaches her that 'a woman's destiny holds love as well as work' (p.288). Yet Eppie's only object of love remains Carol, the woman whom she loves 'so well that I cannot bear to see you spoil your life' (p.286).

Despite the ambivalence of Eppie's feelings for Carol, she acknowledges the primacy of home and husband. Overall then, through evoking the beneficial effects of female to female relations within all female communities, the text manages to displace any threat that might be embodied in those communities by turning them into teaching centres for appropriate womanly behaviour. Ultimately, appropriate female to female friendship is acceptable because it recognises its inferior nature to what women really want - female to male relationships. Further, there is an inherent irony in the text's construction of its women-only space: ironically, one of the justifications for Newnham's existence is grounded on its relationship to the private. In an amusing and ironical narratorial attempt to maintain

---

90 See Vicinus, ' "One Life to Stand Beside Me" ', *op. cit.*, 603-28, for her detailed discussion of the

a public/private, male/female difference in a text advocating university for women we are told that Carol 'if she were a man ... would chafe under college life ... the life of a student isn't the life for a man. She would want to go out into the world and live not sit and dream' (pp.120-1).[91] Ted and Phil, the two reformed male characters, have learnt how to be men, and thus how to be suitable husbands, by undergoing hardship in colonial Africa.[92] The women have, after all, been positioned for most of the text within a domestic pseudo-family.[93] No matter that it is a 'family' which encourages female learning and offers a space for female individuality, that learning and development of identity are for the preservation of the wider cultural order.

4.4 Summary

In *A Newnham Friendship*, just as in *New Grooves* and *Peace with Honour*, higher education, medical or otherwise, does not impair the female body, mind or spirit. On the contrary, it enables women to help other women in ways that accord with conventional definitions of 'femininity' and reaffirm the Victorian hegemony. These 'Girton Girls' and 'Lady Doctors' are not denied autonomy or individuality. However, female individuality is only acceptable when it signifies a female acceptance of womanly service to others. Thus, in these texts, any potential liberation afforded by an education or career becomes secondary to the benefits that that education/work bring to the wider society. In chapter 5 the texts discussed contain 'Girton Girls' and 'Lady Doctors' who are also able to retain their 'femininity'. However, that 'femininity' is in itself problematised through their self-signification as autonomous, reasoned individuals.

---

complexities surrounding female to female friendship as opposed to marriage.

91 For an amusing exposition of the idea that women make better students than men, see 'A Day of His Life at Oxford' and 'A Day of Her Life at Oxford', by 'An Undergraduate' and 'A Lady Undergraduate' in *Murray's Magazine*, 3, (5/1888), 664-677, 678-688.

92 Phil marries Betty.

93 See Carol Dyhouse, *No Distinction of Sex? Women in British Universities 1870-1939*, London 1995, pp.91-124 for a discussion of the ambivalences surrounding the domestic/family-style running of college halls.

Chapter 5

Degrees of Difference: The 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' Triumphant?

5.1 Domesticity, Work and the 'Girton Girl'

> It is to the last degree indecent that women should be dependent on marriage for a professional maintenance. It is highly inexpedient that they should be restricted to a few avocations for which it is presumed that the slightest possible education - or none at all - is adequate. Yet such is the practical result of the exclusion of girls from the higher education.[1]

Chapter 2 outlined the prevalent Victorian notion that women should be educated only for marriage. From the early years of the campaign, however, it was a notion repeatedly questioned. Elizabeth Wolstenholme, writer of the above passage, for example, was one of many who insisted that women could not depend solely upon marriage for financial security; therefore, they must have access to an education to prepare them for paid employment. More overtly, Josephine Butler states: 'The desire for education which is widely felt by English women ... is a desire which springs ... from the conviction that for many women to get knowledge is the only way to get bread'.[2] The early reformers understood that, typically, middle-class parents educated their sons with a future career in mind but neglected their daughters' education assuming that they would marry and thus never need to find paid work. Hence, in arguing for improved educational opportunities for women, Wolstenholme *et al* often addressed their appeals to those who, ultimately, had the power to provide or deny a daughter education: parents - in particular, fathers.

Appeals to parents/fathers took varying forms. In 1860 Emily Davies, arguing that girls should be encouraged to apply themselves to study in order to provide for themselves in case of a 'failure' to marry, dismissed the idea that girls/women should be deprived of an education in case they then compete for 'male' jobs. She points out that '[n]o man in his senses would keep two or three of his sons doing nothing, in order to give the rest a better chance of getting on'.[3]

---

1 Elizabeth C. Wolstenholme, 'The Education of Girls, Its Present and Its Future', in Butler (ed.), *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture. A Series of Essays*, London 1869, p.318.

2 Butler, 'The Education and Employment of Women', (1868), reprinted in Spender (ed.), *The Education Papers: Women's Quest for Equality in Britain 1850-1912*, London 1987, p.72.

3 Davies, 'Letters Addressed to a Daily Paper at Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, 1860', in *Thoughts on Some Questions Relating to Women, 1860-1908*, Cambridge 1910, p.14.

Similarly, Emily Shirreff is insistent that 'parents should be made to feel that, when they cannot insure their daughters an independence, they are bound to educate them, as they would their sons, to provide one for themselves'.[4] Isabella Tod also placed emphasis on the fact that too often fathers expect 'ideal' situations to prevail, when in reality the vicissitudes of life might deprive even a married daughter of her financial security. She writes:

> They [parents] look forward to *all* their daughters marrying, to *all* these marriages being satisfactory, and to the husbands being *always* able and willing to take the active management of everything; neither death, illness, nor untoward circumstances occurring to throw the wives on their own resources ... such is not a true picture of life.[5]

The practical slant is clear in these arguments: a direct correlation was made between an education and future paid employment. However, in these early appeals to parents/fathers to treat their daughters as they do their sons, the reformers were effectively demanding that daughters be treated not as appendages to their family (in particular, their fathers and brothers) but as individuals with their own needs and rights. Thus, they could not escape the fact that they were opposing the common construction of the 'ideal', self-abnegating unmarried daughter. Indeed, some wanted to challenge it directly. Shirreff, for example, betrays the frustration of the unmarried daughter who remains ever fixed in her status as a daughter/child, denied adulthood and independence:

> Even fathers will have to remember that unmarried daughters do not remain children all their lives. The sacrifice of their whole time and faculties may no longer be taken as a matter of course, nor women be expected to drag on a weary existence to middle-age without ever having had one week or one £5 note to spend freely as they chose.[6]

Yet having envisaged a time when unmarried daughters will be freed from '[t]he absurd pretensions ... of male relations to interfere with their actions and property', she then announces that, of course, women 'can never stand on the same ground as men, since the latter may have professions *and* marriage, while marriage *or* professions must be the alternative for women'.[7] Shirreff then

---

4 Emily Shirreff, 'College Education for Women', *Contemporary Review*, 15, (8/1870), 64.

5 Isabella M.S. Tod, *On the Education of Girls of the Middle Classes*, London 1874, p.9.

6 Shirreff, *op.cit.*, 65.

7 *ibid.*

concludes her article by asserting that the experiment of higher education and work for women is only acceptable if it does not 'disturb what we have hitherto deemed the natural relations between men and women' which make motherhood woman's most important function.[8]

The conflicting tone of Shirreff's article is common in much writing in favour of women's education in the 1860s and 1870s and reflects the way in which attempts to promote new opportunities came into direct conflict with deeply ingrained ideologies connected with the family and marriage. Thus, while challenges were made to the idea that women should be educated only for marriage, the latter was itself typically upheld as an ideal. Further, the prevalent marital model, predicated on a hierarchy of gender difference, was frequently insisted upon by the reformers. Frances Power Cobbe, for example, states emphatically: 'A man and a woman are *parallel* to each other, but never *similar* ... They are *equivalents* to each other, but never *equals*. He is the pound in gold, and she is the twenty shillings in silver. All these differences are innate, unchangeable, ineradicable.'[9] Maria Grey was clear that it was wrong to hold marriage up as the only aim in a girl's life.[10] Yet she also writes that within marriage a wife's 'subjection to him [her husband] will be a joy not a hardship ... for it is natural and easy to her to surrender herself to the strength which is also protection'.[11]

From the 1860s to the early 1880s, such attempts to uphold cultural order whilst simultaneously overwriting the common construction of the unmarried daughter led, for the most part, to a reluctance to acknowledge that women might wish to pursue intellectual pursuits for their own sake; to a rejection of any suggestion that some women might *choose* not to marry; and to an assertion that women could not have both a profession and marriage. By the late 1880s and 1890s, however, as Deborah Gorham illustrates, some constructions of the 'ideal' daughter had incorporated the changes in female opportunities and now allowed her an education, a profession *and* her 'femininity'.[12] The latter suggesting that '[t]he

---

8 *ibid.*, 66.

9 Cobbe, *Female Education and How it Might Be Affected by University Examinations: A Paper Read at the Social Science Congress, London 1862*, London 1862 [second edition], p.9.

10 See Grey, *On the Special Requirements for Improving the Education of Girls. A Paper Read by Mrs William Grey at the Meeting of the Society of Arts, May 31st, 1871. With an Appendix*, London 1872, pp.25-6.

11 Grey, *Last Words to Girls on Life in School and After School*, London 1889, p.275.

12 See Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal*, London 1982, pp.57-8.

ideal modern girl represents an adaptation, not a repudiation, of the older values'.[13] Nonetheless, despite this 'adaptation' in inscriptions of the unmarried daughter, the anxiety generated by the inevitable implication that the educated woman might not perceive marriage and domesticity as her appropriate spheres continued. By the last decade of the century it was common for middle-class girls to be sent to school; the higher education of women was an established phenomenon; the intellectual ability of women could no longer be denied; and the Oxbridge women's colleges were ready to make their (unsuccessful) attempts to persuade the universities to confer degrees on women. By the 1890s enough time had elapsed since the opening of the first colleges for women for the impact of the higher education of women to be assessed: marriage remained a key issue.

As was demonstrated in chapter 4, women students in the Victorian period were concerned to emphasise that those women who attended university were 'ordinary' women with 'ordinary' aspirations (for marriage). In 1895, however, the *Nineteenth Century* published an article on 'The After-Careers of University-Educated Women', by Alice M. Gordon. It begins by asking '[w]hat future does a university education open out for women? and how much or how little do girls benefit by devoting some of the brightest years of their young lives to acquiring a higher education than was attained by their mothers and grandmothers?'[14] In order to answer the questions of possibly concerned parents, Gordon turns to the college reports of Girton and Newnham. She concludes that '[j]udging from the reports ... the larger proportion of university-educated women do not seem to make marriage their career in life'.[15] She even goes so far as to list the subjects studied at the colleges in order of matrimonial precedence! Significantly, she also points to something that by the 1890s had become an issue of serious concern. Women might not themselves see marriage as desirable:

> It is, of course, in these days of progress an open question, that must be decided according to each woman's individuality, whether marriage is to be considered an achievement or a 'come down;' but mothers will be prudent if they realise that, on the whole, the statistics ... do not lead

13 *ibid.*, p.58.

14 Alice M. Gordon, 'The After-Careers of University-Educated Women', *Nineteenth Century*, 37, (6/1895), 955.

15 *ibid.*, 956.

> one to the conclusion that marriage is either desired or attained by the majority of very highly educated women.[16]

Faithfull, in her reminiscences of her Oxford experiences, also claims that 'there can be little doubt that indirectly the higher education of women discouraged marriage', because it offered women 'an alternative which had none of the dullness or limitations of home life, and much of the variety and opportunity for initiative and energy which would not normally be found in domesticity'.[17] Further, David Rubenstein suggests that the fact that university-educated women were less likely to marry 'was apparently a matter of little concern to the students themselves, who found in education an alternative to the marriage which might not come their way or which they might be unwilling to accept'.[18] He notes, however, that 'parents were much more likely to be concerned'.[19]

Henrietta Keddie's *Many Daughters* (1900) reflects the extent to which the acceptable construction of the daughter educated for paid employment still collided with a cultural need to retain a construction of the daughter as 'feminine' and open to marriage. The text both reiterates the periodical debate of the 1860s and 1870s on female education, work, marriage, and domesticity, and rebuts the alarmist connotations of the 1890s focus on the educated woman's proclivity to remain unmarried. Significantly, the text offers the reader several positive versions of the 'modern' unmarried daughter who both understands the importance of education *and* who demonstrates a clear lack of inclination to reject social conformity. Hence, while the text remains immovable on its central premise that women must be provided with a suitable education and training for future paid work, it also manages to endorse both the domestic *and* the public as appropriate spheres for women. Thus, the novel promotes the right for trained women to compete successfully within the competitive market-place; it upholds woman's inclination to also attain marriage; and, most importantly, it also refuses to construct domesticity and marriage as woman's sole fulfilment. It can then inscribe the 'Girton Girl' as both potentially challenging, ultimately acceptable, but, above all, as a positive influence in both the domestic and the public spheres. However, it can only effect this through locating her in a pseudo-family run by a patriarchal head/father (Sam Ferrie), assisted by a surrogate mother figure (Miss Barrett). As such, it reinscribes the

16 *ibid.*, 959-960.

17 Faithfull, *In the House of My Pilgrimage*, London 1924, p.63.

18 Rubinstein, *Before the Suffragettes: Women's Emancipation in the 1890s*, Brighton 1986, p.188.

19 *ibid.* Rubinstein goes on to discuss Gordon's article.

unmarried daughter, albeit ambivalently, in relation to the *pater familias*. In this family, however, the unmarried daughter exists not to serve others but to serve herself. Further, in this family, the pseudo-father is not concerned to find husbands for his 'daughters' but to prepare them for work.

The majority of the text is set in 'The Woman's Institute and Emporium of Technical Knowledge and its Productions',[20] an institution founded by '[a] body of men' (p.1) who 'were aroused to the difficulty of working women in all ranks, and proceeded *with masculine promptitude and energy* to do their best to improve matters' (p.1) [my italics]. From the start of the text it is clear that it is a male perspicacity which has confronted the social ill created by a lack of training opportunities for women. The text thus immediately endorses the need for the college by validating it as a paternalistic enterprise. The Institute the insightful men have founded offers its women students a full training in an eclectic range of careers: music, nursing, photography, bookbinding, librarianship, printing, watchmaking, hairdressing, floristry, market-gardening, millinery, cooking, dressmaking and medicine are just some of the courses offered.

Throughout the text, the iniquity of a social system which denies unmarried daughters a training for paid employment is made explicit. Moreover, the text promotes a woman's commitment to her own education and training as a signifier of her worth and explicitly displaces the more conventional signifiers of status: wealth and/or class. Thus, it is irrelevant that the women students 'might not all have even the faintest infusion of blue blood in their veins, they might not - many of them - be altogether guiltless of a connection with trade in some form' (p.42).[21] Further, while the text justifies the foundation of the college on the grounds that women need education in order to enable them to attain an independent living, it also implies that training is useful for *all* women, regardless of their financial situation or social status: 'The niece of a Cabinet minister cheerfully took to scrubbing pots and pans as the first step in a cook's progress. The daughter of a man who was rolling in well-earned wealth ... desired nothing better than to become so perfect a shirtmaker as to found a great shirtmaking establishment' (pp.11-12). There is a sense here of

---

20 'Sarah Tytler' [Henrietta Keddie], *Many Daughters*, London 1900, p.4. All further quotations are from this edition and will be referred to in the main text by page number.

21 The insistence in the text that it is not money which gives value to the individual is maintained throughout. However, the novel offers no portrayals of working-class girls. Further, the students live in boarding-houses which are tailored to meet their different financial and, thus, class, backgrounds. St Catherine' s Boarding House - the focus of the text - is one of the 'better' ones.

female enjoyment at training for work. However, the text is equally concerned to demonstrate the practical benefits of female education.

The students at the college are the many unmarried daughters whose fathers or guardians have the good sense to provide them with a practical education. The importance of this is reiterated throughout the novel but is most obviously demonstrated in the portrayal of Charlotte Kirby. Charlotte, sent to the Institute by her wise father, has previously been pampered by her mother and cannot understand why her father 'is always harping now on people being fully equipped for whatever may befall them. It is not as if I needed to work, or as if mother was not very much annoyed by my coming to this queer radical Institute' (p.36). When asked by Ferrie what she proposes to study and what her aim is she replies, flippantly:

> I cannot say that I have an aim, or that I propose to myself any career ... I am that contemptible, out-of-date being, an ordinary young lady. My father sent me here and here I am. If you do not think me, with my empty mind and frivolous views, fit for this excellent institution, and decide on sending me back to where I came from, I am afraid I shall be only too thankful, for I shall perfectly agree with you that an emporium of trade's goods is not in my line. (p.70)

In many Victorian novels, even as late as 1900, such a stance might be read as an appropriate response from a well-brought up young lady. In this text, however, it is misguided conceit. Charlotte's prejudice derives from mistaken views about class (trade is beneath her) and gender (women of wealth do not need to train for work). Predictably, in the course of the text, the wisdom of the father prevails over the ignorance the out-of-date mother has passed on to her daughter: once more, this demonstrates 'masculine' perspicacity. Charlotte finds her métier in floristry and table-decorating and achieves a first-class result. When her father dies leaving the family in financial hardship, she joins forces with two former students who run a fruit farm. It is subsequently expanded to include flowers. She is now in a position to support her mother and sister. Charlotte is not accorded a husband at the close of the text. This simple narrative strategy is effective in demonstrating that daughters should be educated to deal with the vicissitudes of life.

However, while determined to promote its message that women should have access to work in the public sphere, the text simultaneously works to maintain a link between femaleness and domesticity. Charlotte's training is in floristry: a typically 'feminine' pursuit. Despite the wide variety of courses offered at the Institute, the students drawn in detail in the text are all training for domestic

pursuits. The two main female characters, for example, Delia Wentworth (the 'Girton Girl') and Sarah Lyster train, respectively, in cookery and millinery. Admittedly, they are training professionally, nonetheless, the text promotes the professionalisation of domestic pursuits as the primary means for women to attain a living. The link made between training for public work and domesticity is further exacerbated by the construction of the Institute itself as a pseudo-family, led by a benevolent patriarch. While the Oxbridge women's colleges did tend to construct an environment which in many ways replicated that of the family, they were headed and run by women, even if under the auspices of men. This text denies women the potential power embodied in control over their own education. It is made explicit throughout that the Institute is run and directed by Ferrie, 'a man of acknowledged talent - genius, even; he had distinguished himself at his university' (p.5). Ferrie devotes all his time and money to his empire, and the narrator, tongue-in-cheek, refers to the Institute as 'his kingdom' (p.59) and the women students as 'his subjects' (p.59). When newcomers arrive it is Ferrie who, for their own good, decides their choice of study, further emphasising the need for 'fatherly' control over daughters. Moreover, Ferrie's perception of the inviolate 'femininity' of his many 'daughters' enables the text to endorse women's right to an education while maintaining a split between 'masculine' and 'feminine' impulses.

Ferrie's reading of 'femininity' is one which both allows women the intellectual and practical capacity to train for a career *and* one which acknowledges their innate need for fatherly control, even when adults. For example, after the students learn that a personal sacrifice has enabled Ferrie to buy a plot of land to set up as a market-garden, they cheer him. His 'masculine' reaction is to think to himself '[w]hat children women - young and old - are after all! But how they must want this garden!' (p.100): the use of the word 'children' here further serves to locate him as pseudo-father figure. Most importantly, Ferrie has the necessary 'masculine' insight to perceive that his enterprise is ever in danger of failing, ironically, because of the intrinsically 'feminine' nature of his 'daughters'. That is, the threat in this text is not that the students will be neutered and/or damaged by education but that the many daughters will revert to 'nature' and reject their training. This is most obvious in relation to the text's treatment of marriage.

As a consequence of Ferrie's reading of 'feminine' proclivities, he determines that courtship and marriage are to be forbidden at the Institute: 'marriage ... [is] not to be so much as mentioned by the students ... [t]hey were to be held as much apart from such idle and destructive ideas as those of love and

marriage, while the girls and women were still in their business apprenticeships' (pp.103-4).[22] The satirical tone here makes clear that this is not a female rejection of the centrality of marriage. Rather, Ferrie, as 'father', *must* demand this from his 'daughters' because they, like all their sisters, are so 'feminine' in nature that if he does not watch over them they will falter in their resolve to train for careers. This is an interesting twist on the early arguments against opening higher education to women which claimed that intellectual education for women was impossible because 'femininity' itself precluded women from fully neutering themselves and overcoming their innate desire for marriage. The ambivalences inherent within the text in relation to the latter argument and the novel's concurrent promotion of female work are acted out primarily through the story of Minnie Millar. Despite the fact that the male teaching staff are forbidden to distract the women from their endeavours, Minnie and Colin Roe, the drawing master, fall in love. Initially, this provides the text with a simple means of affirming what Ferrie has feared all along: women cannot help acting like women. Importantly, however, the consequences of this contravention of the Institute's rules also serve to drive the lesson home again: women should not rely on marriage for their livelihood.

Two years after they marry, Minnie and Colin are settled 'on a narrow income in a cramped, commonplace little house' (p.127). Minnie can now 'talk of little else than the price of butcher meat and groceries' (p.129) and, moreover, has an elevated and unwarranted notion of her important status as a wife. When Delia helps her learn cooking, Minnie thinks that as a married woman she knows better:

> than a mere girl, however clever, such as Delia Wentworth was. Delia's knowledge was all theory, or else it was theoretical knowledge on so large a scale that it had no private and individual application; whereas Minnie's was the rapidly-accumulating experience of a young matron ... These girls at St Catherine's knew nothing of an ordinary household. (pp.129-130)

Minnie, now positioned in the private, domestic sphere, perceives the talents of the text's 'Girton Girl' as beneath her own. Her presumptions are punished. Her husband is killed in an accident, leaving the young widow pregnant and penniless. Only the week before she was 'implying that we were a little silly and childish, troubling ourselves with standards and rules and difficulties of our own creating.

---

22 See Rubinstein *op.cit.*, p.191 for examples of the restrictions placed on courtship at the Oxbridge colleges.

She was past all that. She had gone a step beyond us, *and was engaged in the real business of life*' (pp.175-6) [my italics].

Minnie's story, like Charlotte's, is clearly intended to demonstrate that women cannot rely on their fathers, guardians or husbands for their livelihoods. Equally important, it demonstrates that the idea that it is only in the domestic sphere that woman finds 'the real business of life' is misguided. After the birth of her baby, Minnie is found work at the discretion of the compassionate Institute. She is to be subordinate superintendent of a boarding house, a notional job, and the narrator comments that the idea of her enforcing rules is 'little short of grotesque' (p.225). Minnie is then summarily dismissed from the text, her function in proving that the 'real business of life' is wider than wifehood and domesticity having been fulfilled. However, the importance of her story is extended through its juxtaposition with the examination period in the Institute and its relation to the fate of Sarah Lyster and Delia Wentworth.

The advent of the examination period enables the text to introduce another issue which had begun to be readdressed in the 1890s: the issue of ill-health and study.[23] Early in the text the reader learns that Ferrie demands that all the students participate in physical exercise.[24] This is because he is concerned to avoid criticism that in providing women with education his enterprise is a damage to female health. During the examination period he is particularly worried that the students will over-extend themselves. Significantly, however hard he has tried to prevent it, the strain of study has a bad effect on 'feminine human nature' (p.162) and the women 'worked themselves up for the most part into a fever of nervous anxiety and distress' (p.163). The result of the examination fever which floods the Institute 'though different in cause, was not unlike that produced on "pretty Miss Millar" in the days of her love-sickness' (p.167): that is, nervous hysteria.[25] This is a useful analogy in the text for it enables the narrative to intimate that hysteria is common to women whether in love or in training. In fact, however, Ferrie's fears that his students will fall at the last post are realised not because of the strain of education but because of the strain of putting the demands of the domestic and private before

---

23 For a discussion of the purported physical damage caused to women by education see chapter 2, pp.49-52.

24 By 1900, when the novel was published, the physical education of girls and women was well established at schools and colleges.

25 It should be noted, however, that the text also intimates that *men* suffer ill-effects from studying - see pp. 171-2.

the public reputation of the college: the two star students of the college, Sarah and Delia, act out of Christian duty to attend Minnie in her labour.

Minnie's labour begins the night before the chief examination day. While Ferrie and Miss Barrett have already been assisting her, the narrative notes that the Institute must come first, for '[n]o private consideration could interfere with a public duty. No poor little forlorn widow could ... however kind hearts might bleed for her, be suffered to interfere with the main claims of ... the Institute' (pp.179-80). This is because 'whatever the excuse' (p.179) if the students are not supported by Ferrie and Miss Barrett their future careers could suffer. The text thus appears to place the public over the domestic. However, when the labour takes a turn for the worse and competent medical aid is not available Delia and Sarah spend the night with Minnie.

The text constructs an inherent irony in this sacrifice which negates the idea that women exist to serve others not themselves. They give comfort to the nurse and Minnie's brother. Yet 'Minnie was no longer to be calmed by Delia's taking the rule over her' (p.193). When proper medical help finally arrives they are informed that they did the 'patient a modicum of good' (p.197) but are also told '[in future] don't put your fingers into a pie of which, as you are not medical students, you know next to nothing' (p.197). Thus, they have only been of limited help to Minnie. Later they are told they should have called on Miss Barrett. Delia and Sarah must now face their final examinations having had no sleep. As the star pupils of the college, their sacrifice has put '[t]he credit of the Institute ... at stake' and 'its most trusted pupils had not hesitated to endanger it' (p.201). Before the examiners, Sarah's fingers 'could hardly hold a needle. Her eyes were dim, her head was throbbing' (p.203), while Delia cannot measure out her ingredients and once outside the examination room faints. This is a useful narrative strategy. The text has constructed Delia and Sarah as Christian womanly women in their desire to do their 'duty to our neighbour' (p.192); simultaneously it has also affirmed the wider importance of the public role of the college. Further, acting out a domestic duty is shown to be far more strenuous than study and causes bodily collapse, thereby proving that it is not education and training which are injurious to the health of women. The narrator drives this point home after Delia faints by pointing out that it is just as well she did so outside the examination room, for '[t]he doctors would have talked ... of the undue strain on women's physique produced by the modern system of education' (p.215)!

Yet, while creating ironies around their sacrifice, the text also writes Delia and Sarah's decision to help Minnie as their reversion to a self-abnegating

'femininity'. By placing the needs of Minnie first (even though their help is limited) they are putting both their own individual careers and the public reputation of the Institute at risk. This decision is endorsed by the text both because it is in accordance with Christian principles of service and because it demonstrates the validity of Ferrie's fear that his 'daughters' cannot be trained out of their 'feminine' proclivities. Nonetheless, this then confuses the text's own attempt to promote training for women. The narrative attempts to work through this conflict of interests in its delineation of the final fate of Sarah, Delia, Charlotte and Minnie. After her marriage, Minnie rejects the validity of public work for women and perceives her own domestic status as superior. She is punished by loss of her husband and enforced work. Charlotte initially also promotes only the domestic as a suitable sphere for woman. She too is 'punished' by loss of her father and by being accorded no husband at the close of the text. Sarah and Delia, however, endorse the domestic *and* the public as rightful spheres for women. Moreover, they approach both spheres with Christian duty in mind: Sarah perceives her training in millinery as an opportunity to educate women on healthy dress, Delia her cookery as a means to educate them on healthy eating. Both women are then given the 'reward' of access to a career and a husband.

Sarah comes to the college knowing that when she leaves she will need to find paid employment. She plans to train as an artist, as her brother has done. This aspiration is ruthlessly swept aside by Ferrie who informs her that few men, let alone women, earn a living as artists, and that the Institute is not in the business of training its students for destitution: 'it is a school for honest hard workers of every description, where they may master their crafts and go out into the world to claim as a right independence' (p.67). Again, the text maintains a practical tone while actually denying women the ability to succeed in non-domestic pursuits. The two male artists in the text (Val Cheyne and Dick Lyster) are successful in their artistic careers. Sarah trains in millinery. On leaving college she eventually attains the post of managing head of the Joint Stock Good Dress Association, with an estimable salary of £300 p.a. She then marries Val, who has already been helping her with her designs. Importantly, marriage does not mean the end of work. Instead, '[t]he result of it all was that the managing head of the Women's Good Dress Association was no longer a hard-worked, liable-to-be-fagged and harassed girl, but a hard-working matron *secure in the support of a devoted husband* who was fast becoming a distinguished painter' (p.281) [my italics]. Her husband offers not *financial* security but emotional security. Sarah does not need to marry for financial security: she has

a career. Thus, while the text retains a split between female and male, with Val being the 'original' artist, and Sarah working in a 'feminine', domestic field, it refuses to endorse marriage as either the end of female ambition or as a female 'career'. It permits Sarah an autonomous, individual existence as a supported career woman, as well as an existence as a wife. A similar maintenance of both gender difference and of female potential is worked through in more interesting modes in the final fate of the text's 'Girton Girl'.

Delia Wentworth has come to the Institute after studying mathematics at Girton. Indeed, '[s]he was the crack mathematical girl of her year' (p.48). So talented is Delia in this branch of study that she finds 'her recreation in pure mathematics and in working out solutions of problems which had baffled learned professors. Her answers filled the pundits with admiration and envy, and made her a way with their modest signature - "D.W." - into the greatest British and foreign journals devoted to such sublime conundrums' (p.134). This individualised 'Girton Girl' is unabashedly pronounced by the text to be 'a creature out of the common, with an element of distinction in all she did, as if she were destined to great ends' (pp.133-4). Certainly not 'masculinised' by her study, she comes to the Institute to learn cookery because 'it occurred to her that cooking was more practical than mathematics, and just about as difficult' (p.48). Delia's function in the text, as is Sarah's to a lesser degree, is to demonstrate the possibility of a convergence between the 'feminine'/domestic and public work. Her two spheres of training enable the text to construct this convergence in positive terms. After leaving the Institute she puts to use both of her educational experiences: she publishes two volumes on cookery (one for the poor, one for the rich) and a book on 'theory in the region of the higher mathematics' (p.284). Each book is heralded a masterpiece and she is proclaimed a 'mathematical genius' (p.285). The practicality of the cookery books implies service to others; the fact that mathematics is her leisure activity, even though publicly lauded, implies intellectual work for self-fulfilment. Moreover, the fact that Delia's mathematical work is proclaimed 'genius' suggests that female intellectual work may add to a body of academic knowledge.

This positive construction of the 'Girton Girl' and her talents nonetheless has its ambivalences. Delia has fond memories of Girton, but considers the Institute

'more practical and larger minded' (p.254).[26] The art of cookery (and it is written as a practical art in the text) thus becomes more important than the mathematics Girton enabled her to study, which she now pursues as leisure: there is clearly an ironic reversal here (cooking becomes public work, mathematics becomes leisure). In coming to the Institute to learn cookery Delia is obviously setting aside a pursuit associated with the 'masculine' and embracing a career associated with the 'feminine'. Further, Delia's inheritance enables her to come to the rescue of the Institute. The failure of Ferrie's bank leads to his ruin and his resignation of the presidency of the Institute. At this point Delia returns to the Institute with firm ideas: 'She was not glass that she should break, or sugar that she should melt. Her judgment was wide awake and so was her common sense, together with her large-minded, cheerful courage and charity ... She was mistress of many situations' (p.293). This explicit avowal of Delia's strength of character is succeeded by her offer of her inheritance to save the Institute. Ferrie then has his own idea; one which, if taken up, would make the 'Girton Girl' of this text a challenging rather than an acceptably positive construction. Ferrie suggests that Delia take his place: 'You are fit for it; you are made for it. What more proper suggestion than that a woman should preside over the Institute in the interests of women?' (p.303) Instead, the two characters aligned with genius, Delia and Ferrie, get married. The 'Girton Girl' becomes Vice-President of the Institute and turns the President's house into a home, while the many 'daughters' are delighted with the resolution: 'For it was the head and front of the undertaking who was preserved to it, and it was Delia Wentworth, illustrious in combined cookery and mathematics, who had come to the rescue.' (p.307) In this text, then, the educated woman is educated not only for others but also for herself. However, in an attempt to have it both ways, the primary unmarried daughter, the 'Girton Girl', is ultimately transformed into the married woman. Her refusal to take on the presidency of the Institute makes it clear that while the education of women is necessary and positive it must be effected within the confines and the control of the male and must validate a hierarchy which places man as the head of the family and woman his self-avowed subordinate.

---

26 By the 1890s it was not uncommon to find the power invested in 'Girton' denied by intimations that it was really rather limited in what it offered women. See, for example, Herminia's thoughts on Girton in Grant Allen, *The Woman Who Did*, London 1895, p.6.

5.2 The Multi-faceted 'Girton Girl'

In *Many Daughters* the unmarried daughter is relocated from a private family to a pseudo-family promoting the public. This enables the text to endorse the need for female education. Yet despite its attempt to conflate the oppositional spheres of the domestic and the public, and to simultaneously promote female individuality, the text will not allow any challenge to basic differences between 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. It has already been suggested that the arguments against the higher education of woman (including her medical education) sought to preserve basic premises of gender difference. For example, constructions of the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' as diseased and unsexed denoted the danger of obliterating gender difference, while, simultaneously, assertions that female to male difference is innate and can therefore be perverted but never fully negated, attempted to deny the 'threat' of the educated woman.[27] Likewise, the arguments that women lack the intellectual ability to take a degree, that woman's innate proclivity is for marriage, and that men do not desire educated wives, were all premised on varying models of female to male difference;and female to female similarity.[28]

For the most part, the educational reformers attempted to counter these claims by arguing within acceptable parameters: for example, by suggesting that education was useful in the domestic sphere. Indeed, Gorham maintains that 'few voices [in the period] raised any sustained challenge to the Victorian conception of male and female roles'.[29] Similarly, Sara Delamont states that '[i]t was *only* by continuing to glorify the Victorian domestic ideal, as the educational pioneers all did, that any educational progress could be made'.[30] While broadly true, these readings of the impact of the changes in educational opportunities for middle-class women are too simplistic. The very fact that women demanded (and then attained) access to higher education challenged, rewrote and negotiated, even if it did not overthrow, concepts of gender roles; and certainly threatened and unbalanced concepts of the domestic 'ideal'. Higher education for women gave them the chance to think, rather than be thought for. As Sidgwick states, confidently, women at university 'will gradually learn to rely on themselves. They will learn not only to read books, but to use them, to combine the observations and reasoning of others with observations

---

27 See chapters 2 and 3 above.

28 See chapters 2 and 3 above.

29 Gorham, *op.cit.*, p.120.

30 Delamont, 'The Domestic Ideology and Women's Education', in Delamont and Duffin (eds), *The Nineteenth Century Woman: Her Cultural and Physical World*, New York 1978, p.184.

and reasoning of their own'.[31] The very existence of the higher-educated woman implied both a partial loss of male control over signification/knowledge and her partial independence from 'male' rationality. Further, in some writing on women's education there is a clear desire to confront the artificial and cultural origins of concepts of female to male mental difference. In particular, there is an insistence on confronting the benefits to be gained by men by the inscription of women and men in oppositional terms.

William Knight's lecture on the higher education of women, published in 1887, is an obvious example of an attempt to confront the cultural conditioning inherent in the notion that separate spheres for women and men are a necessity in order to prevent woman's unsexing. Knight uncovers what he perceives as the genuine motive for male objections to university education for women:

> There was an idea abroad that if a nation educated its women thoroughly, it would unsex them, or at least make them unpractical or undomestic; and one explanation of the antipathy to their higher education ... is just this notion that it must of necessity lead women to step out of their proper sphere, and intrude into that of men, or at least that it may unfit them for the discharge of those duties which have been from time immemorial peculiarly their own. Now, I cannot help thinking that there has been a good deal of selfishness at the root of this objection. I do not say that there has been jealousy on the part of men; *but much of the dislike to the idea of the higher education of women has arisen from the old notion ... that their chief function is to minister to the comforts of the male sex.* [my italics] [32]

The explicit contention that opposition to the educated woman arose from a desire to maintain a view of woman which saw her existence as solely for the benefit of men was, perhaps surprisingly, frequently expounded. Charles Pascoe, in his handbook on the schools and colleges open to upper/middle-class women, recounts how he canvassed his male friends on their thoughts on women's education and 'all ignored the fact, that education, thorough and complete, is

---

31 Sidgwick, *University Education of Women: A Lecture Delivered at University College, Liverpool, in May 1896*, Cambridge 1897, p.20.

32 William Knight, *The Higher Education of Women with Special Reference to the St Andrew[']s University L.L.A Title and Diploma Being a Lecture Delivered in the University Colleges of Leeds, Liverpool, Bristol etc.*, Edinburgh 1887, p.6. Optimistically, Knight sees objections to women's higher education as belonging to a time past.

ordinarily imbued with a loftier ambition than the cooking of omelettes'.[33] He expresses surprise at the 'low estimate ... held by some persons of the value of female education' and states that '[a]ccording to ... not a few, women are only required to minister to the more selfish wants of men, and these satisfied, what needs for woman's higher education?' [34]

Davies is equally blunt in considering the argument that women's helplessness should be reinforced because it is useful 'as a stimulus to exertion in men'.[35] 'This', she states, 'is scarcely a fair argument, unless it could be proved that it is also good for women to sit with folded hands admiring the activity of men.' [36] In her later work *The Higher Education of Women*, Davies expanded on this in relation to the purported differences between women and men. Her contention here was that ideals of manliness and womanliness, dependent upon oppositional difference, are socially constructed and not natural. It is known, she writes, 'that women have a part in the world, and that men are by no means ciphers in the home circle - we know that a man who should be all head would be as monstrous an anomaly as a woman all heart'.[37] She develops this initial point later in the text by noting that objections to the opening of the professions to women are often premised on the belief that:

> a similarity of pursuits would produce an unpleasant similarity between men and women. One of the most plausible arguments in [sic] behalf of dissimilar education is that which rests on the general desirableness of variety. We do not want to be all alike ... And if it could be shown that the isolation of the sexes produces variety of the best kind, and to the greatest possible extent, it would no doubt be a strong argument in its favour. But it is questionable whether this is the best means of obtaining variety.[38]

This point was reiterated by W.B. Hodgson in his lecture on the education of girls and the employment of upper-class women. He states that male to male differences are 'as great, and probably as frequent, as those between men and

---

33 Charles Eyre Pascoe, *Schools for Girls and Colleges for Women. A Handbook of Female Education Chiefly Designed for the Use of Persons of the Upper Middle Classes. Together with some Chapters on the Higher Employment of Women*, London 1879, p.215.

34 *ibid.* Pascoe goes on to say that women are partly to blame for this!

35 Davies, 'Letters Addressed to a Daily Paper at Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1860', in *op.cit.*, p.15.

36 *ibid.*

37 Davies, *The Higher Education of Women*, London 1866, p.19.

38 *ibid.*, pp.114-5. This is in sharp contrast to Cobbe's insistence on difference quoted above.

women', yet these differences are ignored.[39] He asks '[w]hy ought we, then, to insist on applying to the whole female sex, and to it only, an exclusive text, which is equally applicable to many men, and which to many women is not applicable at all?' [40] Hodgson goes on to state determinedly that '[t]his haunting fear lest, by a common education, women should be fashioned into a repulsive similitude to men, does not, however, really rest on any philosophic basis, but, as it seems to me, on a few facts hastily generalised, and badly interpreted'.[41]

Although still remaining within the constraints of dominant discourses, in questioning male to female difference, the reformers were, implicitly or explicitly, arguing that female to *female* difference be acknowledged and, hence, that female individuality be accepted. Thus, Millicent Fawcett, arguing for Oxford degrees for women, writes, logically, that she is not asking that *all* women be given a degree, only that the opportunity is afforded to those who are capable of attaining one.[42] In her reminiscences, Helena Swanwick was also perceptive on the double-standard involved in the construction of women in terms of female to male difference. She notes that '[o]ne of a woman's heaviest handicaps is the common tendency to view any failure or dereliction on the part of a woman as due, not to her individual idiosyncrasy, but to her sex; any merit or success on the other hand, being set down to her being an "exceptional woman" '.[43] The exposure of opposition to women's higher education as a desire to preserve an artificial difference between women and men which was for the latter's benefit also then, perhaps inadvertently, exposed a desire to see women as different from men in order to hide potential female to female difference. Further, the very existence of the positively constructed 'Girton Girl', with her intellectual attainments, her freedom to use her education to define herself as a thinking individual, effectively highlighted an alternative difference to that favoured by mainstream culture: the difference between 'artificial'/social concepts of woman's capability and her actual abilities.

Elizabeth Edmonds's *Mary Myles, A Study* (1888) offers the reader a version of the 'Girton Girl' which indicates the desirability of educating women to

---

39 W.B. [William Ballantyne] Hodgson, *The Education of Girls and the Employment of Women of the Upper Classes Educationally Considered: Two Lectures*, London 1869 [second edition], pp.9-10.

40 *ibid.*, p.10.

41 *ibid.*, p.18.

42 Millicent Garrett Fawcett, 'Degrees for Women at Oxford', *Contemporary Review*, 69, (3/1896), 351-2.

43 Swanwick, *I Have Been Young*, London 1935, p.124.

think for themselves. This 'Girton Girl' disproves every fallacious theory about the higher education of women as completely as Lynn Linton's college girls prove their validity. Simultaneously, however, the text manages to construct a 'Girton Girl' who embodies the virtues of genuine womanhood.[44] Indeed, one of the most important narrative strategies in the text is its demonstration of the impossibility of typologising women according to superficial stereotypes. A rejection of rigid classifications of women is apparent from the beginning of the text. An Oxford academic, hearing from his colleague at Cambridge of their 'new phalanx of Amazons' [45] and of the 'mere girl' (vol.1 pp.2-3) who 'came out best in the classics' (vol.1 p.2) responds by assuming that 'she wears spectacles, is sallow, and ... round-shouldered' (vol.1 p.2). Moreover, he claims that '[t]he history of all time has shown that the supreme power of women has always lain in her beauty not in her learning' and that 'it is of no consequence if a truly beautiful woman could not write her own name' (vol. 1 p.3). From this point onwards the text works to negate both this caricatured version of the 'Girton Girl' and of 'woman'; and its concurrent assumption that it is impossible for womanhood to signify both beauty and intellect; an assumption itself based on constructions of a difference between male (active intellect) and female (passive beauty). That the text will problematise this false difference is apparent early on. After the unadvised assumptions of the Oxford academic, whom we later learn is Dr Grantham, he is struck dumb by the beauty of the heroine who attained classical honours, Mary Myles.

Grantham's initial misconceptions about the 'Girton Girl' are succeeded in the text by a series of examples of the ways in which Mary Myles eludes/resists classification. While the men she meets falls in love with her (thereby disproving the claim that men do not wish to marry educated women), the male characters in the text have a marked tendency to attempt to define her. Thus, for Grantham, who first sees her playing catch, she is Nausikka; for the gardener at Mrs Hazelhurst's she is a seraphim; for the Vicar she is Circe and a poem to be read; and for Herbert Langridge she is an angel, Calypso, a wood-nymph, a Grecian statue and a hamadryad. Importantly, all these classifications of Mary are imposed upon her by men, yet she remains a body which cannot be fully interpreted. Indeed, it is this

---

44 Mary Myles is another example of the 'modern girl' referred to by Gorham who has adapted to changes in women's educational patterns.

45 Mrs Edmonds [Elizabeth Mayhew Edmonds], *Mary Myles, A Study*, London 1888, vol.1, p.2. All further quotations are from this edition and will be referred to in the main text by volume and page number.

inability to define her, to 'read' her which makes her attractive: there is something in her face 'which seemed to defy the power of the analyst' (vol.1 p.12), something in her appearance and character 'not to be perceived' (vol.1 p.41).

In the course of the text, the 'mystery' behind Mary is not exposed. The attempts to 'read' her essence by relating her to other figures are failed male attempts to classify her and give her meaning. Simultaneously, the different versions of her suggest the diversity of her character. Most importantly, it is her negation of the social, false split between female beauty and intellect, and between the projected versions of her as classical figure against her status as 'Girton Girl', which underline the limitations of perceiving women in purely monosemic and/or oppositional terms. As Circe, Nausikka and Calypso, Mary is situated by the male characters as a passive, mysterious beauty to be defined and read; further, she is imprisoned within classical constructs, themselves created by men, which carry specific significations.[46] As 'Girton Girl' and governess she carries alternative significations which are at odds with the classical characters she is seen to represent. This is most obvious in Herbert's initial vision of her as a nymph.

Herbert's first sight of Mary, as with Grantham's at the start of the text, places her under his gaze. Coming across her asleep in the woods, Herbert looks upon her and falls in love. The narrative makes it clear that it is not *Mary* he has fallen in love with but his own reading of the woman before him. He is in love 'not with Mary Myles, the governess, whose name he had never heard, and of whose very existence he was ignorant, but with the wood-nymph asleep yonder, with loosened hair and bared feet' (vol.1 pp.32-3). When he meets Mary formally, now attired in a manner proper for a governess, he is astonished at the difference: 'the wood-nymph ... and Miss Myles were one and the same personification, and yet how different! No nymph, no dryad, met his covert gaze, but a lady whose style of dress was scrupulously neat, and almost formal' (vol.1 pp.39-40). When confronted with the disparity between his vision and the reality, Herbert becomes more intrigued:

> The more he pondered upon the fact that the two - his nymph and Miss Myles were one, the more *his interest began to be awakened in the duality of the impressions conveyed to his mind by one individual.* That which before had been almost visionary, and when viewed by his intellect almost an unreality, and only to be approached through the

46 Calypso, Circe and Nausikka, the three 'temptations' confronted by Odysseus, can be broadly read to represent, respectively, the dutiful woman, the witch/whore, and the virgin.

> imagination, was now converted into a very real and sober fact indeed. (vol.1 p.40) [my italics]

This passage highlights the text's construction of Mary as an individual woman rather than a 'type' of womanhood and is reiterated in relation to Grantham's perceptions of her. When he meets Mary after she has left Girton and is working for Mrs Hazelhurst, he recalls his first sight of her playing catch and thinks of the difference between this 'poetic figure ... and Mary Myles, the governess ... [so] Nausikaa no more. Then slowly he woke to the fact that this Mary Myles was most gifted, most truthful, and most fair' (vol.1 pp.80-1). The revelation of different versions of Mary, significantly, does not lessen either Herbert's or Grantham's love for her. The 'Girton Girl' and the governess are just as attractive in appearance and character as Nausikaa and the hamadryad. However, as 'Girton Girl' and governess Mary becomes not a 'poetic figure' (that is, an inspiration for male creation) but an independent, rational individual.

These intimations of the polysemic nature of Mary, which defy male classification, are furthered by the disparity between the expectations of those who learn of her 'Girton Girl' status and their experiences on meeting Mary, the individual woman. Thus, dinner guests at the Hazelhursts' dread meeting an ex-Girtonian, bringing with them what the text proves to be fallacious notions of the learned woman. To their surprise, Mary has 'a slight, elegant, and graceful figure' (vol.1 p.10) and is not opinionated or advanced in her manner. A male guest can now 'rejoice that he had at last met with a highly cultivated woman, who had no theories of her own, or who, at least, was not voluble upon them' (vol.1 p.11). It is important to note that, as a learned woman, Mary is appreciated because she has 'a feminine intellect which was capable of understanding and appreciating [men]' (vol.1 p.11). That is, the text can condone her status as learned woman only because it is accompanied by a 'feminine' deference to the male intellect and character. This, however, is too simplistic: the construction of Mary herself as a willing proponent of patriarchal values and definitions of 'femininity' is reiterated throughout the text, yet her *actual* progression in the novel is at odds with her own apparent endorsement of dominant ideologies and thus provides a counter-narrative thread which undermines her collusion with male values.

This narrative strategy enables the text to inscribe Mary as a woman maintaining 'traditional' values concurrent to its delineation of her finding fulfilment in her independent lifestyle. Thus, the text portrays Mary behaving in modes which appear to be suitably self-renunciatory but which, in fact, enable her to achieve

alternative ambitions. This is most obvious in relation to the ending of her engagement with Herbert. Mary's motives for giving up her fiancé are noble ones. Herbert's mother is furious that Mary, six years older than her son, has become pre-eminent with him. She accuses Mary of using her woman's wiles and her age to ensnare him. Demanding that Mary release him from their engagement, she reminds her that Herbert is under age (he is 20) and tells Mary that she will never give her permission for the marriage. She also insults Mary by referring to her Girton education and her profession: 'I did not come here to listen to mock hysterics from a lady professor, nor do I choose to have a scene with my sister's governess.' (vol.1 p.223) The text makes it clear that it is Mrs Langridge who is at fault; yet, nonetheless, Mary does bond with her. While never accepting the validity of her objections, Mary does accept that as Herbert's mother, given the sacrifices she has made for him, she has the first claim on him.[47] At the cost of her personal happiness she relinquishes Herbert.

This self-sacrifice is highly significant. Mary employs religious terminology when explaining to Herbert her motives for parting from him and the text lapses into an irritatingly sentimental style. 'Self-renunciation' says Mary, 'is the high road to bliss.' (vol.1 p.248) While Herbert suggests they elope, Mary counters this by suggesting their love would lose its reverence and fade if such an ignoble course was taken. Even in this scene the irony of her 'feminine' nature is at work. After exhorting Herbert with scripture, she points out that she is older than he is, and thus should take the lead, then renounces this unladylike behaviour by emphasising that '[w]hen we meet again you will be older than I in all the richer wisdom that comes from a man's varied experiences, in all the wider, the greater knowledge of a stronger, larger nature. You will lead then, and I shall follow, shall follow, dear, in silence!' (vol.1 p.250) This speech becomes highly ironic in the light of the rest of the text.

The separation of Herbert and the 'Girton Girl' lasts for ten years and enables the narrative to provide its heroine with a progression encompassing more than romance. During their separation Herbert goes to India to work for the Indian Civil Service, continues loving Mary, but becomes careworn, bitter and looks older

47 Mrs Langridge is widowed at a young age but comes to love another man. She will not marry him because her son must come first. Henceforth, she devotes her life to her son intending him to follow in his father's footsteps.

than his years on his return. In contrast, the morning after she has bid him farewell Mary:

> felt something akin to gladness that she had been strong enough to release her young lover, that she had of her own free will given the son back to the mother; she, who had held him in bonds stronger than life, had with her own hands, with her own lips, loosed him. (vol.2 p.4)

Again, this reads as her acceptance of the virtue of suitable, noble female sacrifice. In fact the relinquishing of Herbert leads her to take up a position as Headmistress of Chippenham College for Girls with a salary of £500 p.a. When Herbert comes to claim his bride ten years on she is now 36 and a woman of independent means. At this point in the text the false opposition between female learning and female beauty once again comes to the forefront. Earlier in the text, Herbert writes to his mother describing Mary as a Grecian statue, adding 'I believe she is also very, very, learned, but I only know her as an angel' (vol.1 p.204). At this point, Herbert is still attempting to position Mary as a form of the angel in the house; he has yet to understand the significance of her learning. On his return from India he becomes irritated by intimations given to him by his aunt that at Mary's 'late' age and after her life's work she must now be careworn and faded: 'He wanted his wife to be the admired of all; he wished to be the envied husband of such a wife.' (vol.2 p.116) During his ten years apart from Mary, Herbert has not learnt to perceive her as an individual. Moreover, the text now makes explicit Herbert's failure to realise that the opposition of beauty and learning is a false one and that the combination of beauty and learning a 'natural' one: he is repelled at the thought of 'the unfitness and the unloveliness of gentle womanhood earning its own livelihood' (vol.2 p.108) and at the 'unwonted alliance of feminine loveliness and grace with learning' (vol.2 p.108). Not having seen her learning as important when he was a youth, he now worries '[c]an it be possible that she had narrowed down into a thing of formalities - a walking Greek Grammar?' (vol.2 p.107) Arriving at the college to see her for the first time he finds he must wait to see the Lady Principal until later, for she is teaching and '[t]he expression "Lady Principal" annoyed him above measure' (vol.2 p.122).

Herbert's reunion with Mary draws together these examples of his misconceived versions of 'ideal' womanliness. While he expects some overt display of the mourning she has undergone for all their years apart, Mary calmly informs him she has been considering him as her husband. While he demands she leave 'this place of exile' (vol.2 p.128), she reminds him of her professional obligations.

While he announces they are to marry from Sunnyside, she is grieved to disagree, but nonetheless does so. Despite Herbert's experiences in his 'man's world', the 'Girton Girl' is still in control; and despite her earlier declaration, she does not follow him in silence. This is most comically (unintentionally) reiterated in her request to act as his secretary. His objection is that she has 'had enough drudgery in England' (vol.2 p.133). Herbert cannot perceive that her independent life has given her fulfilment. Mary neatly turns the tables on him. While he has been in India, feeding his bitterness at their separation, she has been learning Hindustani 'to make myself a helpmeet for my husband' (vol.2 p.134). Again, Mary uses the 'traditional' role of the wife to attain what she needs for her own fulfilment for 'woe is me if I may not work; your India then would kill me in a year' (vol.2 p.133).

In his reconciliation with Mary, Herbert comes to finally understand that just as he must perceive Mary as an individual woman, rather than as Mary the hamadryad, Mary the intellectual, Mary as his wife, he must also perceive that what he can offer her is simply himself. He returns to England to find 'a calm, rare-souled woman, enjoying her intellectual life, blessing all around her, and being blessed. A full life, apparently. What had he to add to it?' (vol.2 p.144) He then realises 'that he had nothing except himself, and he felt it to be a somewhat tarnished self from that other self which had won the heart of that incomparable woman ten years since' (vol.2 p.144). He later relinquishes his attempt to control her and 'in a few manly words left to her all future arrangements preliminary to their departure for India' (vol.2 p.188).

By the close of the novel Mary has attained the accepted symbols of her status as a 'feminine' woman: she is wife, mother and helpmeet to her husband. Yet, in attaining these statuses, Mary has taught her husband of the limitations of his perceptions of women; has defied 'medical' pronouncements about the damage higher education inflicts on women by having children late in her thirties; and has retained for herself an arena of intellectual activity by acting as 'helpmeet' to her husband as his secretary. She has also proved that the higher education of women educes, draws out what is godly in a woman; enables her to lead an independent lifestyle when necessary; teaches her how to serve the community; and, perhaps most importantly, enables her to find personal fulfilment in a career.

5.3 The 'Lady Doctor' Diagnoses

The 'Girton Girl' in Edmonds's text is by no means a radical construction. Nonetheless, it does suggest some of the ways in which the 'Girton Girl' could be seen to overcome and negate false conceptions of female to male difference which

write the 'feminine' in relation to physical beauty and mental passivity and the 'masculine' in relation to intellectual activity and physical health. Yet, in reality, even when the intellectual potential of women was accepted, there remained a need to hierarchise male and female capabilities. Thus, for example, Sidgwick, while asserting that university will teach women to use their own reason, also refers to the affirmation made by some that 'women have not the same capacity as men for original work'.[48] According to Sidgwick, this may be true, for women 'will always be distracted and drawn away from learned pursuits by domestic duties proportionally more than men are by practical affairs'.[49] Sidgwick sees women's intellectual potential being realised in 'the subordinate fields of science and learning', hopes that women 'will do well much laborious work that needs to be done, though it is not very brilliant or striking' and believes, in particular, that women will 'prove excellent assistants'.[50] This is clearly an attempt to affirm the usefulness of intellectual learning for women while still maintaining hierarchical concepts of female to male difference. However, it was less easy to deny the potentially individual/original nature of the medical woman: the appellation doctor asserted her as a reader of the body rather than a body to be read.

Armed with anatomical knowledge, the woman doctor was potentially capable of demystifying the female body as a source of female weakness and could potentially redefine female 'ill-health' in modes which, while still inevitably culturally conditioned, nonetheless stood partially outside the values of the male medical profession. The authority of male versions of innate female ill-health propagated by some male doctors could thus be overwritten and the underlying economic and social advantages accrued by the preservation of a male monopoly and a male control over readings of the female body could be exposed. As early as 1865, for example, an unknown writer in the *Alexandra Magazine* denounces the medical treatises supposedly written expressly for the benefit of women's health but in fact motivated by economics:

> Medical errors with regard to feminine ailments are very numerous and have done a great deal of harm. We have no hesitation in saying that they have caused a whole class of diseases which afford doctors the most fertile field they possess for the exercise of their profession; and it is our belief that these errors are propagated best by the

48 Sidgwick, *op. cit.*, p.14.

49 *ibid.*

50 *ibid.*

> publications written expressly for the use of women, and proposing to guide them in the management of their illnesses and in the care of their children's health.[51]

Once legally qualified, women doctors themselves were in a position to rewrite male diagnoses of female health. Indeed, this was a feature of the early years of the campaign: Garrett Anderson's reply to Maudsley's 'physiological' arguments against the higher education of women uses her authority as a doctor to denounce his claims. In general, and unsurprisingly, Victorian women doctors made diagnoses which retained conventional stances, in particular on 'illnesses' with moral implications. For example, Blackwell names masturbation and fornication as 'the two radical vices from which all other forms of unnatural vice spring'.[52] Nonetheless, early women doctors also rewrote dominant versions of female desire and reproduction. Thus, Blackwell asserts that 'delight in the kiss and caress - the love-touch' is 'physical sexual expression, as much as the special act of the male' and denies '[t]he prevalent fallacy that sexual passion is the almost exclusive attribute of men'.[53] Dr Mary Scharlieb writes that '[p]regnancy is not a disease and the pregnant woman should not consider herself a patient'.[54] She also explicitly challenges the paradoxical idea that a healthy women is one in delicate health asserting:

> Many people think that sickness and suffering mature the character and increase its capacity for reflecting the Divine Image, but consideration will convince us that ill-health prevents the practice of the more active virtues, and renders the passive virtues of patience, submission and unselfishness very difficult.[55]

Similarly, the idea that female inactivity (typically written as a necessary correlative of female ill-health) was in itself a *cause* rather than a consequence of female delicacy of body, mind and spirit was propounded. Davies's contention, quoted earlier, that it is absurd to require women to be passive merely in order to

---

51 Anon., ' "Female Medical Society": The First English School of Medicine for Women', *Alexandra Magazine*, 2, (6/1865), 323.

52 Blackwell, *The Human Element in Sex: Being a Model Enquiry into the Relation of Sexual Physiology to Christian Morality*, London 1884 [second edition], p.32.

53 *ibid.*, pp.45,6.

54 Scharlieb, *A Woman's Words to Women on the Care of Their Health in England and India*, London 1895, p.118.

55 *ibid.*, p.4.

permit men to demonstrate their active intellects, was reiterated by women doctors who pointed out that lack of sensible occupation was likely to cause female ill-health. For example, Garrett Anderson notes that a girl's 'break-down of nervous and physical health seems at any rate to be distinctly traceable to want of adequate mental interest and occupation in the years immediately succeeding school life'.[56]

Thus, the woman doctor was potentially powerful in a number of ways. She could name diseases and define female ill-health in alternative modes to those commonly accepted. She could deny the prevalent belief that scientific learning was incompatible with the female character. Her medical work proved that women could succeed within a male arena. The medical woman, metaphorically and literally, could be seen to be reclaiming the female body as a site to be signified by women not men. Not only was the woman physician thus seen as an economic threat to the male doctor but she was also seen as a threat to concepts of womanhood which both informed the male doctor's work and which the medical profession itself upheld. In a challenge to male (medical) authority, for example, Blackwell asserts that women must learn that a higher authority than imperfect man should lead them. Women doctors should not be guided by 'blind imitation of men; nor thoughtless acceptance of whatever may be taught them ... for this would be to endorse the widespread error that the race is men'.[57] Women, Blackwell writes confidently, 'begin to realize that truth comes to us through imperfect human media, and is thus rendered imperfect ... [w]omen are thus rising above the errors of the past, and blind acceptance of imperfect authority; and are earnestly striving to learn the will of the Creator'.[58] Blackwell's argument is couched in suitably Christian terms and she endorses maternity as woman's spiritual power. Yet her claim that women should look to God rather than men to seek guidance on the rightness of their actions was a renouncement of the right of men to 'diagnose' what was suitable for women to undertake.

The extent to which the medical woman was perceived as a threat to dominant expectations about gender roles becomes of further significance when considered in relation to common conceptions of the role and function of the professional doctor within Victorian society; and his (and, eventually, her) 'scientific'

---

56 Garrett Anderson, 'Sex in Mind and Education: A Reply', *Fortnightly Review*, 15, n.s., (5/1874), 590.

57 Blackwell, *The Influence of Women in the Profession of Medicine. Address Given at the Opening of the Winter Session of the London School of Medicine for Women*, London 1889, p.7.

58 *ibid.*, p.10.

contribution to cultural constructions of maleness and femaleness. The perceived relationship between doctor and patient during the period can be read as a corollary of that perceived between female and male: the passive, ignorant patient was seen to be protected and ministered to, defined by, the knowledgeable physician. Moreover, as already discussed, the physician was seen to have a moral and spiritual role. In one sense the illness itself became irrelevant within these hierarchies: the patient was the sick body to be attended on by the doctor. Such a projected relationship between the doctor and sick patient was an extension, or indeed an expression, of 'rightful' relations between women and men in other spheres: woman as passive, requiring guidance and protection from her own state of innate ill-health. The unhealthy man, then, underwent feminisation, was temporarily identified with the qualities associated with women. In this context, it is not surprising that Victorian conceptions of the female body wrote it as a signifying site of woman's 'delicacy': if the sick male was seen to undergo temporary feminisation or to signify individual male weakness, then the sick female must be the embodiment of the diseased nature of 'femininity' itself. Hence, the threat embodied by the woman doctor can be read, at least in part, as a threat that the reiteration of gender difference written onto the male and female body by medical discourse might be (and indeed was) overthrown not only by her successful practice but also by her alternative diagnoses.

Mary Gleed Tuttiet's comic novel *Sweethearts and Friends: A Story of the Seventies* (1897) deconstructs notions of female to male mental and physical difference, largely through its inscription of a 'Lady Doctor' (Amy Langton). The text focuses on the physical body of its 'Lady Doctor' as a signifying site of the benefits of female mental occupation. Further, the 'Lady Doctor's' diagnoses of the 'delicate' female, Lettice Marshall, expose the artificial nature of the construction of woman as innately prone to ill-health. In turn, the validity of male 'diagnoses' of womanhood are brought into question: it is the physical, mental and emotional strength of the 'Lady Doctor' which saves the life of the temporarily feminised hero, Vivian Lester.[59] Purporting to be a retrospective story of a 'Lady Doctor' training and working in the 1870s, the text combines an awareness of the struggle experienced by the early pioneers with an ironic perspective which renders comic adverse reactions to Amy's unconventional aspirations. The text thus manages to imply the serious nature of the struggles of the early years while also implying that,

59 For further discussion see pp.211-2 below.

from a modern 1890s perspective, opponents of change are ludicrously out of date. For example, the text gently mocks Amy's mother for seeing her daughter as a trial because 'she is always thinking, and wanting to do something ... [i]f Amy would but give up thinking ... [w]hat good can possibly come to a girl who thinks'.[60] It also treats with humour Amy's need to hide from visitors in order to read 'a big book illustrated by diagrams of the human form' (p.14).

The comic treatment of the issue, however, does not prevent the text from endorsing the 'Lady Doctor' in more serious modes. Amy's desire to study medicine, for example, does not derive from a need to work for economic security. Instead, it derives from both a desire to help others, and, importantly, a desire to fulfil her own need for sensible occupation. As a woman with a 'leaning towards science' (p.39), Amy needs to exercise her avid mental faculties which from childhood lead her to worry 'her elders for a reason for everything' (p.40). Indeed, early in the text the narrator informs the reader that as an adolescent girl Amy wishes that when she is older she *will* be required to work so that she can avoid the boredom of 'going to parties, receiving callers, shopping, and making clothes' (p.32). Until she is introduced to the study of Greek by a teacher, Amy dreads life after school, seeing it 'as an ending to all things, like death, but with no desirable hereafter' (p.40). Once she has begun to study properly she begins 'to look forward to a liveable life, full of aims and interests' (p.40).

Amy's understanding of the beneficial nature of female mental occupation is juxtaposed with the frivolous behaviour of Lettice. In a strategy similar to Thomas's in *New Grooves*, the text offers a comparison between the 'advanced' woman, in the form of the 'Lady Doctor' and the 'ornamental' woman in the form of the flirtatious Lettice. As with Thomas's text, it is the hero, Vivian Lester, who must learn to judge the difference between artificial and genuine womanhood. However, while Thomas's text treats the subject with an insistent reverence, in *Sweethearts and Friends* the comic treatment of the hero effectively renders banal any opposition to the 'Lady Doctor' and makes her inscription positive and, to a degree, challenging.

The 'Immaculate Lester', as the hero is, sometimes mockingly, known, perceives himself as a chivalrous male whose old-fashioned conceptions of female

60 'Maxwell Gray' [Mary Gleed Tuttiet], *Sweethearts and Friends: A Story of the Seventies*, London 1897, pp.12 -13. All further quotations are from this edition and will be referred to in the main text by page number.

to male difference are threatened with extinction in modern society. Determinedly protective of women, and convinced of his superiority, he defines perfect 'femininity' in hierarchical terms, with woman located below man, and as strong in her weakness:

> 'The - ideal - h'm! - woman - is - ah! - a being whose weakness is her strength, in whom - ah! - feeling replaces intellect, meekness and refinement strength, who - should be a rest to her husband by her freedom from toil, a strength to him by the appeal of her weakness, a joy to him by her freedom from sorrow.' (p.25)

Lester's definition/'diagnosis' of the 'ideal' woman is juxtaposed with a textual analepsis whereby the validity of his ideas is undermined. In a discussion between Amy and her school teacher, Louisa Stanley, the text proposes more appropriate role models for 'feminine' behaviour. Amy nervously asks '[d]on't men hate learned women? ... I should not like men to hate me. I should hate to be an old maid' (p.35), and queries whether or not it is 'unfeminine to know much' (p.35). Louisa swiftly disabuses her of these foolish ideas: 'don't be a young owl. Knowing Greek will not unfit a girl to be a wife. Oh! my dear Amy, half the misery of life comes from wives knowing nothing that interests their husbands' (pp.35-6). She also gives her examples of learned women from the past.

These two opposing versions of 'femininity', the one demanding that women relinquish all claim to the intellectual in order to be strong in their weakness, the other asserting woman's natural proclivity for activity and learning, are tested in the course of the text. This testing is carried out primarily in relation to Lester, Amy and Lettice. Lester must come to perceive the difference between natural and artificial constructions of womanhood; between socially conditioned versions of 'femininity' and real female talents. In the course of the text, once again, it is the female body which becomes the focus of the conflict over appropriate and inappropriate female aspirations. Amy's body is literally constructed as a site of physical strength, its proportions at odds with those usually associated with the 'feminine'. In contrast, Lettice deliberately uses her body as a source of weakness in order to attract men. The text's construction of these two opposing versions of the female body is then used to denote the benefit of female occupation. Yet, even so, the text can only permit itself to denote Amy's body as a source of strength by feminising (that is, weakening) the other primary female bodies in the text *and*, more interestingly, that of the hero. This gives rise to interesting ambivalences in relation to the degree to which the text can allow itself to endorse its 'Lady Doctor'. Importantly, however, it

is the repudiation of the notion that female strength derives from female delicacy/weakness which remains.

As already intimated, it is Lester who is the chief proponent of female weakness. His notions of womanhood are dealt with comically throughout. His opinions of suitable female behaviour are facile and clichéd. Taking his chivalrous role to the extent of offering marriage to Amy to save her from the ignominy of a medical career - 'I would do anything on earth to save you from this dreadful fate. Let me be your knight; let me rescue you' (p.51) - Lester is unable to conceive of women freely choosing work above matrimony. As one of few remaining chivalrous men, Lester's attempts to do his duty to womankind prove an onerous task: meeting up with Amy and her all-woman party in Switzerland, '[t]he Immaculate was deeply grieved; he felt that all these girls ought to have been married long ago and thus saved. But he could not, under existing social arrangements, marry them all, else he would cheerfully have done his duty as a gallant knight' (p.87). Ironically, Lester sees his chivalrous impulses in relation to a medieval code of honour and bemoans the move away from a time when the noble knight could rescue the virtuous maiden. The text renders his pretensions ironical by its reminder that in times past women were healers of the sick; that is, even Lester's 'old-fashioned' notions of chivalry, which require him to define women as strong in their weakness, are at odds with the past.

Lester seeks an 'ideal' woman who will prove the validity of his definitions of female weakness. Sadly for the hero, he no longer lives in a society that perceives ideality in his terms. Further, ironically, his inability to define women according to their individual abilities leads to a failure to assess whether the women he meets are actually embodiments of his ideal or not: he is unable to distinguish between natural and artificial womanliness. Dr Amy Langton is confident, assertive and autonomous: she is not conducive to either his control or his attempts to control the signification of acceptable womanhood. The vacuous and frivolous Lettice, on the other hand, who is quite prepared to droop before him in a mock faint and who screams at the sight of frogs, is transformed in his imagination from a silly young woman into an ideal creation. Lettice appears to conform to his definition of 'femininity' precisely because she pretends to be weak so that he can show his strength: at their first meeting Lester is appalled that Amy treats Lettice's fall matter of factly, forbidding her to faint, and robustly asserting that she is not injured. Lettice, seeing the advantages of requiring 'masculine succour' (p.66) is happy for Lester to believe she needs carrying to the carriage and unashamed to 'recover'

once he has left. After this inauspicious start to their relationship, one based on deceit and false female fragility, Lester later projects onto Lettice the qualities he thinks he desires in a wife: 'Lettice was to him a celestial vision, a flawless being' states the narrator, adding, comically, 'she was indeed not Lettice at all, but an impossible creation of his own imagination' (p.154). Even when forced to acknowledge to himself the flawed nature of this 'ideal' woman, Lester maintains a belief in the male right to define and control women. Once Lettice has 'declined from an ideal to an erring creature, with frailties in place of perfections' (pp.174-5) he determines to 'mould his ideal wife from this plastic young material; Love would chisel something lovely from such unsullied youth' (p.175). Lettice does not prove amenable to his will, despite her initial appearance of weakness, and eventually elopes with another man.

The text constructs Lettice as a woman who has perceived the male-created correlation between femaleness and physical delicacy and who attempts to use it for her own ends. Her function in the text is to denote the invalid 'diagnoses' of the male (Lester is not able to 'read' Lettice correctly) and the valid 'diagnoses' of the female. Amy literally makes a diagnosis of Lettice's body (she perceives that Lettice is not really hurt when she falls) and metaphorically makes a 'diagnosis' of her character (she perceives the superficial nature of Lettice's acceptance of male authority). The validity of the 'Lady Doctor's' right to diagnose appropriate 'femininity' is further evoked in the text's construction of Amy's body in direct opposition to Lettice's. The apparently 'advanced' woman, whose physical appearance is a corollary of her mental and emotional health, is the more appropriate partner for the chivalrous knight: but only when he has rejected his earlier 'diagnoses' of 'ideal' womanhood. It is no surprise that the text reveals Lester as discovering that it is Amy, the 'Lady Doctor' who is the 'ideal' wife. However, it refuses to denote Amy as the kind of 'ideal' woman Lester once defined and it creates some interesting ambivalences around her status in the text. These ambivalences deconstruct one of the main ways in which this thesis has already indicated that female to male difference was propagated in the period: that of the physical.

As was demonstrated in Lester's definition of the ideal wife, he initially perceives female weakness as strength. However, from the start of the text, Amy's body/appearance represents female strength and physical and mental health. Indeed, when Lester first meets Amy, her appearance causes him concern. Her face, which is beautiful, is not admired by Lester for it has 'a look of expectancy and

eager intelligence, that he thought unbecoming in a woman' (p.17). Following this, Lester, 'who liked ladies to dine on air and sentiment' (p.17) is horrified to see Amy dispatch a large piece of meat given to her because 'there is too much for anyone else' (p.17). This early reference to Amy's large appetite is built on later in the text with further references to her healthy body. When Lester meets her some years after she has completed her training she looks 'so brilliantly healthful' (p.57) that he wonders if she has given up medicine: she has not. Ironically, the other members of her Swiss party are all in ill-health: her sister, Grace, has fallen into a 'pining state' (p.57); Lettice is recovering from a fever; and Louisa is in 'broken health' (p.57). Amy, on the other hand 'had grown so tall' (p.71). This is significant, for the text makes a direct link between female health, epitomised by Amy's 'unfeminine' body and her learning. Grown tall in height, Amy is also 'known to be so learned' (p.71) and Lester wonders whether 'any man could love a being so strong, so superior, so capable' (p.71). Succeeding this, Lettice comments on Amy's physical strength as 'something frightful' (p.74). Lester replies that it is admirable while 'glad that no such strength deprived him of the pleasure of supporting the fairy-like creature [Lettice] upon his arm' (p.75). While Lester admires Amy, at this point in the text he is still confined by his need to 'diagnose' the female body as fragile in order to define his own physical strength as a sign of his overall superiority.

The natural female body is written as healthy because it has been 'fed' intellectually and physically: Amy's body. The 'artificial' or sick female body is caused, Amy intimates, by lack of sensible occupation. This is demonstrated in a number of ways. Lettice, as already shown, has recourse to deceit, playing on her supposed fragility in order to gain her own ends. That is, her education into 'femininity' has taught her that men enjoy domination and that women can find 'power' in their manipulation of pretend passivity. Her obsession with flirting and petty power games is a result of her lack of sensible occupation. Alternatively, Grace is careworn and ill at a young age after having closeted herself in an anglican sisterhood. Amy diagnoses Grace's delicacy as a direct derivation of her lack of suitable occupation, saying 'she couldn't stand the emptiness of our frivolous, aimless girl-life. Slumming and church embroidery were not enough for her. So she drifted into this Sisterhood. The severity, monotony and tyranny are killing her. That is all' (p.86). Here ambivalences arise. Amy also speculates that had her sister's 'lost dream' (p.96) not prevented her from living 'a wholesome life' (p.96) maybe she would not be so weary 'of body and spirit' (p.96). Likewise, her childhood mentor, Louisa, is intimated to be suffering from tuberculosis. Amy

diagnoses her ill-health as a result neither of too much study when training to be a doctor nor of her work as a school mistress but as a consequence of 'the repression of every faculty but that of monotonous endurance' (p.87) which she endured as a private governess. Her 'wholesome [medical] study' (p.87), claims Amy, came too late to save her health. Yet Louisa was also disappointed in love and Amy wonders how much this has to do with her sickness.[61] In the very process, then, of redefining the causes of female ill-health, the text reinscribes man as the central signifying force in women's lives. This ambivalence is not confronted in the text. Amy, too, while possessing the text's healthy female body, only shows physical weakness as a consequence of 'love-sickness': it is after Lester tells Amy that he wishes to marry Lettice that she succumbs to a head cold and faints at his feet. However, the text's redeeming feature is its insistence on treating its polemic with humour. Even here it cannot resist reminding the reader of the difference between Amy and Lettice: Lester has to catch 'at the very least ten stone' (p.110) when Amy faints.

The text thus offers a positive inscription of the 'Lady Doctor' through inscribing her physical health as a corollary of her mental and emotional health. The only intimations of female ill-health, albeit with their reactionary connotations, are linked to failure in love. In this text, the female body remains a signifying site but is transformed into a site denoting the appropriateness of medical work for women. Moreover, while in previous texts the 'Lady Doctor's' aid to other women was constructed in relation to male hegemony, in this text, the 'Lady Doctor's' commitment to her career leads her to renounce marriage to a man who does not condone women's right to careers. Thus, when Lester proposes to Amy, she appropriates conventional terminology to turn him down in order to continue her part in pioneering medical work: 'I am no fit wife for you, I could not devote myself. I cannot give up my profession. My interests would clash with yours. My profession - ' (p.267). When Lester interjects with talk of love, the narrative insistently retains its humour by commenting that to resist such ideal lovemaking a woman would have to be a demon, '[y]et this young savage, - to her lasting discredit, one thinks - accomplished this dreadful feat' (p.267). Her reasons for rejecting him, though, are serious:

> She had devoted her life, she said, to a serious study of one of the most noble arts and crafts ... 'Think,' she added, 'of the degraded, stunted, wasted lives of innumerable middle-class women, who cannot possibly marry, purely because

61 Louisa does get engaged later in the text and no more is heard of her illness!

> there are not enough men to marry them all. Think of the immense difficulties and obstacles that a few women have surmounted in the task of opening up new lines of usefulness to these women and removing the stigma from female erudition and labour ... consider if this is a time for women to snatch at personal happiness, when they have gone as far, suffered as much, and made others suffer as much, as I have. I cannot, I must not, dare not, give it up, my friend. Choose another wife ... You need a different kind of wife.' (pp.267-69)

Amy and Lester do eventually marry. Yet still the text will not compromise on its line that female mental and physical health go hand in hand. Before an alliance between them is effected, Lester is required to acknowledge the disparity between his early version of the 'ideal' woman and the alternative qualities of Dr Amy. The text effects this through a simplistic and exaggerated inversion of female to male difference which is the culmination of previous denotations of Amy's strength. Having defined his ideal woman as strong in her weakness, Lester himself is transformed, temporarily, into the literal epitome of his ideal woman. In an ironic reversal of roles, he is saved from death by the chivalrous courage of the 'Lady Doctor'. Rejecting passivity, weakness and submission, Amy saves the life of Lester by dashing 'through hose-streams, policemen and firemen' (p.280) to catch a rope and swarm 'up it like a cat' (p.280).[62] Her dramatic rescue is described thus:

> [she] reached the tottering balcony in a few minutes. Snatching the rope up, she passed it round the man's body, bound it firmly, and tried to lift him over. He fell, helpless but not senseless, into her arms, just able to second her efforts by throwing his weight here and there; she got him over the balcony without a jerk; the rails gave and bent in the strain ... 'Now let go of me,' she said to the dazed exhausted man, who obeyed, swung free with a cry of agony, then sank swooning, as she paid the rope out from her torn hands. (pp.280-1)

Thus, the final fainting body in the text is a man's. This reversal effects a transformation in the hero. His narrow definitions of 'femininity', which previously diagnosed women as strong in their weakness, would have resulted in his death had they been characterised in Amy. In his brief union with Lettice, Lester desired to mould her to his will. Now he defines himself as Amy's Frankenstein, created

---

62 Lester earlier defines 'ideal' femininity as passivity, weakness and submissiveness. See p.206 above.

through her power and strength.[63] Now he not only embraces her medical career but suggests that as husband and wife they should obey each other and offers himself as her helpmeet: 'Amy, I am not the hide-bound, prejudiced ass I was. Love has taught me better, a woman's love, a woman's heroism. Dear, I will never hinder you; only give me the privilege of helping.' (p.283) The text enables the 'Lady Doctor' to both retain social approval by gaining a husband and to continue her career with her husband's support. Thus, the 'Lady Doctor' of this text is portrayed as an individual with physical, mental and emotional strengths. The caricature of the grotesque, physically unattractive 'Lady Doctor' is overwritten by a positive signification of the strength of the female body. However, the comedy of the text, used to render the prejudices of the male absurd, does not enable the narrative to offer a complex deconstruction of the social conditioning which serves to construct gender classifications. The simplistic inversion of traditional role plays at the close of the text is useful in furthering the humour through which the text mocks versions of female to male difference but the final closure of the text intimates that, during their marriage, Amy's 'advanced' views are tempered by the moderation of the Immaculate Lester. At least, however, it also intimates that Lester's 'traditional' views are modified by his wife's more progressive ones.

5.4 The 'Lady Doctor' Dissects, the Dissection of the 'Lady Doctor'

Lester's original definition of the 'ideal' woman is an attempt to elevate the 'strength' of the male through a celebration of the 'weakness' of the female. A similar attempt to heighten male superiority through the denigration of woman is apparent in the contentions, outlined in chapter 3, concerning the purported damage effected by permitting women access to the dissecting-room: while man could safely enter the dissecting-room without fear of immorality, woman's sinful nature made anatomical study dangerous. The ludicrousness of this argument was strongly countered by the proponents of medical women. As early as 1860, 'A Physician' writes in *The English Woman's Journal* that '[t]he study of the structure of the human body is one of the most enlightening and ennobling exercises of the human mind; the master-piece of the Divine Artificer, no work of art ever has or ever can approach it. I wish all educated persons would direct their attention to it'.[64]

---

63 This is clearly a confusion between Frankenstein and the Monster.

64 'A Physician', 'Medical Education for Ladies', *The English Woman's Journal*, 5, (7/1860), 316.

However, this male doctor retained distaste at the thought of women actually dissecting dead bodies and could only recommend medical education for ladies if they practised their anatomy on models of the human body: these would not shock 'fastidious feelings'.[65] Others were less circumspect. In 1864, replying to the objection that 'the studies of the dissecting room are repulsive to feminine feelings', an anonymous author in the *Victoria Magazine* states: 'Without love for the science of medicine, the study of anatomy must be repulsive to all, both men and women; but if that love is capable of changing anatomy into a beautiful science in the minds of men, why should it not be able to work a similar change in the minds of women?'[66]

By 1868 a writer in *Macmillan's Magazine* was claiming that while '[i]t is sometimes said that the study of anatomy and physiology would tend to injure or destroy the fine instinct of purity which characterises most women' the 'serious study of a scientific subject can hardly be injurious to any one, [sic] and the possession of special safeguards or the absence of special temptations would suggest that women are peculiarly adapted to approach the science of anatomy'.[67] Some went further. An anonymous author writing on *Medical Intolerance and Lady Doctors* in 1867, for example, focuses overtly on the egotism inherent in the argument that men are immune to the effects of the dissecting-room:

> Their [male doctors'] objections are various and illogical ... [they say] ... it would be improper for you to study anatomy. We derive no moral injury from it ourselves ... we are 'holier than you'. Our minds are loftier. Our ideas have a greater affinity to what is pure and spotless ... you have no innate love of goodness like we have ... They would have us believe that they are not men with ordinary human weaknesses ... that, in their case, the common impulses and instincts of humanity are merged into something much more exalted and sublime ... In fact, if we would believe their doctrine, they are no longer what they were; they have escaped the common herd and are indeed become 'new creatures'.[68]

In the 1880s, frustration over the social conditioning which resulted in unwarranted negative judgments on those women who rejected the male right to exclusive domains continued:

---

65 *ibid.*

66 Anon., 'Lady Doctors', *Victoria Magazine*, 3, (6/1864), 130, 131.

67 Anon., 'Women Physicians', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 18, (9/1868), 375.

68 Anon., *Medical Intolerance and Lady Doctors*, in *Fitzroy Pamphlets*, London 1867, pp.4, 10.

> The reproach of unwomanliness is keen and bitter to a woman, as that of unmanliness is to a man; and rightly so, for in their true meaning the words manly and womanly comprise all that is noblest and most adorning in either sex. Nevertheless they ... have come to bear a secondary and conventional signification, referable to the standard of custom and etiquette accepted by society at the given time and place.[69]

This writer, Edith Ara Huntley, a student at the London School of Medicine for women, goes on to assert that approaching anatomical study (that is, entering the dissecting-room) believing that the human body is 'one of the highest works of the Creator' can bring 'no moral defilement, while ... [women] will find ample scope for their best intellectual faculties'.[70] By the end of the century, Kenealy could recall with glee how, during her years at the London School of Medicine in the 1880s, the dissecting-room was cleared out for use on formal occasions. The women students 'always enjoyed a sort of grim ... satisfaction, remembering that those shocked conventional persons had sat for an hour on the identical spot where ... a tank of anatomical "horrors" had been ... they thought the flowers ... and our best frocks "so very nice and womanly, you know" '.[71]

The dissecting-room, 'dissection', and womanliness are a main focus in Margaret Todd's novel *Mona Maclean: Medical Student* (1892).[72] The novel's immense popularity suggests the extent to which the 'Lady Doctor' remained a potent cultural figure up to and beyond the end of the century: a year after its first publication the novel reached its sixth edition, by 1900 its fifteenth; it was reissued again in 1906, 1909 and 1913.[73] The text's construction of the 'Lady Doctor', like Gleed Tuttiet's, is steadfast in its endorsement of medicine as a suitable profession for women. Of particular interest, however, is its exploration of the way in which definitions of womanliness are dependent on what Huntley (above) calls 'custom

---

69 Edith Ara Huntley, *The Study and Practise of Medicine by Women*, Lewes 1886, p.5.

70 *ibid.*, p.13.

71 Arabella Kenealy, 'How Women Doctors Are Made', *The Ludgate*, 4, n.s., (5/1897), 32-3.

72 Rubinstein, in *op.cit*, suggests that the novel is based on the life and work of Dr Emily Flemming. He assumes that Hilda Martindale's reference to a novel based on Flemming in *Some Victorian Portraits and Others*, London 1948, p.66, is to this text. Martindale does not refer to the novel by title. Christine Thompson regards the text as Todd's attempt to combine 'the qualities she admires in both Sophia Jex-Blake and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson'. See Thompson, 'Disruptive Desire: Medical Careers for Victorian Women in Fact and Fiction', *Nineteenth Century Contexts*, 15, no.2 (1991), 189.

73 Details taken from *The British Library Catalogue* and *The English Catalogue of Books.*

and etiquette'. Specifically, the text intimates that while the entrance of middle-class women into formerly male arenas provokes anxiety about the revoking of womanliness, such definitions are set aside in relation to 'lower'-class working women and the spheres in which they are employed.[74] In part, this enables the text to provide a challenging construction of the 'Lady Doctor', particularly in its ironic delineation of the hero's ambivalent reaction on discovering that the woman he loves is not a 'lower'-class assistant in a shop but a genteel medical student. Christine Thompson suggests that 'the main action of the plot centers around Mona's appropriate class affiliation, and not around her vocation as a doctor' and that to be 'a woman doctor that everyone can admire, Mona has to be unassailably middle-class in appearance, behaviour, and opinions'.[75] The text does maintain its inherent middle-class bias, and, indeed, uses it to displace some of the anxiety it generates by its positive inscription of the 'Lady Doctor'. Mona throughout *is* constructed as a character displaying the 'virtues' and 'values' of the middle class. However, the fact that the text makes a link between different spheres of work for women of different classes is also the means by which it attempts to write Mona as an individual.

Mona Maclean: Medical Student is able to make and explore conflicts and connections between perceptions of the medical woman and wider perceptions of womanhood through its play on the meaning of 'dissection' and 'dissecting'. Most obviously, the text plays out the arguments concerning women and men in the dissecting-room and arrives at its own synthesis. Indeed, the acceptably positive construction of the 'Lady Doctor' is dependent upon the text's repudiation of the argument that women's study of anatomy in the dissecting-room results in loss of innocence. The argument that anatomical study impairs womanliness is first presented to the reader via Mona's upper-class uncle, Sir Munro. His initial horror and bemusement at her medical aspirations derive from a fear that his niece will be unsexed by her entrance into the dissecting-room. Although believing in the need for women to be attended on by women (the 'delicacy' argument) he asserts that the negative consequences of a medical training must be far worse for her than they are for men: 'It is bad for a *man*, but a man has some virtues which remain untouched by it. A woman loses everything that makes womanhood fair and

74 For a discussion of the different impact of improved educational opportunities for women and girls from different classes see Delamont, 'The Contradictions in Ladies' Education' in Delamont and Duffin (eds), *op.cit.*, pp.134-163.

75 Thompson, *op.cit.*, 193.

attractive. You *must* be becoming hard and blunted?'[76] Sir Munro is puzzled by Mona because he can tell from her bodily appearance (its womanliness) and her manner of behaving that '[t]here is not a trace that is not perfectly womanly. And yet I cannot understand it! From the very nature of your work you must revel in scenes of horror' (vol.1 p.38). On gaining an affirmative reply to his query as to whether she dissects he exclaims '[t]hink of that alone! It is human butchery' (vol.1 p.39). Importantly, the text then offers the reader insight into Mona's thoughts. It is worth quoting them at length for they demonstrate Mona's natural scientific inclination, the absurdity of perceiving anatomy as butchery, and the difficulties in explaining the beauty of anatomy to the uninitiated:

> a sense of hopelessness came upon her, as she realised how she was handicapped in this discussion. She must either be silent or speak in an unknown tongue. How could she explain to this man the wonder and the beauty of the work that he dismissed in a brutal phrase? How could she talk of the ever-new field for observation, corroboration and discovery; that unlimited scope for the keen eye, the skilful hand, the thinking brain, the mature judgment? How could she describe those exquisite mechanisms and traceries, those variations of a common type, developing in accordance with fixed law, and yet with a perfectness of adaptation that *a priori* would have seemed like an impossible fairy tale? ... 'To be a true anatomist,' she thought with glowing face, 'one would need to be a mechanician and a scientist, an artist and a philosopher. He who is not something of all of these must be content to learn his work as a trade.' (vol.1 pp.39-40)

In the process of implying the difficulty the lay person has in understanding the realities of the dissecting-room and anatomy, the text actually manages to promote it as an elevated occupation. However, it also refuses to idealise or simplify the issue: Sir Munro goes on to ask Mona '[d]o you remember your first day in the dissecting-room?' (vol.1 p.40) She is then reminded of the initial horrors experienced by all students when they first enter the dissecting-room but points out that one does not become 'blunted when one ceases to look at the garbage side of a subject. Every subject, I suppose, *has* its garbage side, if one is on the look-out for it; and in anatomy, unfortunately, that is the side that strikes one first, and consequently the only one outsiders see' (vol.1 pp.40-1). Mona and Munro's

---

76 'Graham Travers' [Margaret Todd], *Mona Maclean: Medical Student*, London 1892, vol.1, p.21. All further quotations, apart from that in footnote 78 below, are from this edition and will be referred to in the main text by volume and page number.

discussion occurs early in the text and thus enables it to set out the parameters of the opposing arguments concerning woman's entrance to the dissecting-room. It then proceeds to provide a series of examples which serve to endorse Mona's view.

Most obviously, this early debate concerning women and anatomy is reiterated later in the text in a discussion between Sir Munro and Ralph Dudley. Not yet aware that Munro is related to the Mona he knows as a shop girl, Ralph indicates to the reader his suitability for his final union with Mona, the medical student, by speaking out against medicine as something which 'blunts' womanhood; by rejecting the idea that medicine is 'grimy work' (vol.2 p.192); and by pointing out that 'even anatomy, like most things, is as you make it. Many men take possession of a "little city of sewers," but I should think a pure and good woman might chance to find herself in the "temple of the Holy Ghost" ' (vol.2 p.194). Just prior to this the narrative has briefly recounted an incident in the men's dissecting-room where Dudley advises a young male student who is shocked and repulsed by what goes on there: that is, the text reiterates its contention that anatomy can be 'filthy' or ennobling depending on perspective and circumstance, *not* depending upon sex. Earlier in the text, Mona's friend, Doris, is awestruck to hear that the women students laugh while busy with their dissecting: 'She had pictured to herself heroic self-abnegation; but laughter!' (vol.2 p.31) Mona is matter of fact about it: 'We laughed a great deal at an Irish girl who could only remember the nerves of the arm by ligaturing them with different-coloured threads. When girls are doing crewel-work, or painting milking-stools, they are not incessantly thinking of the source of their materials. No more are we.' (vol.2 p.31)[77] Work in the dissecting-room, states Mona, 'simply becomes *our work*, sacred or commonplace, according to our character and way of looking at things' (vol.2 p.31).

The text sets out the context of work in the dissecting-room; delineates the ignorance of those who can only imagine what it is like; and shows that it is the individual, rather than 'woman' or 'man', who approaches the dissecting-room in different ways. It then drives its lesson home through a detailed portrayal of female students in the dissecting-room: an entire chapter of the novel is dedicated to the dissecting-room. Near to the end of term, the women students are discussing the coming examinations; gossiping about Mona's technique in the dissecting-room;

77 The link Mona makes here between women dissecting and women engaged in other forms of work is part of the text's wider discussion of suitable work for women.

and wondering why she failed the examinations when she first took them. Mona, the reader learns, is a marvel in the dissecting-room: 'For one honest nerve with a name, she shows you a dozen that are nameless; and the number of abnormalities that she contrives to find is simply appalling.' (vol.3 p.91) This, says one of the students, shows 'she has a spirit of genuine scientific research' (vol. 3 p.91). The women then discuss *why* Mona, with these abilities, failed her anatomy examination, at which point Mona herself enters, joins in the discussion and then 'took the forceps in her hand, and in a moment the old enthusiasm came back, "How very interesting!" she said. "Look at this deep epigastric." And a quarter of an hour had passed before she remembered her guest and her luncheon' (vol.3 p.96).

The scene in the dissecting-room is significant in the most obvious sense that it demonstrates the ordinariness of scientific study by women and rejects any intimation that what occurs in the room is an affront to respectability. However, it has a further resonance in the text. Mona comes into the dissecting-room to find herself being 'dissected' by the other students. This alternative form of 'dissection' is an implicit theme of the novel as a whole. Mona must learn to 'dissect' her experiences in different spheres - social, professional and personal - in order to attain fulfilment. In particular, she must 'dissect' her experiences as shop girl in relation to her experiences as medical student. This enables the text to then 'dissect' the relationship between common conceptions of the 'Lady Doctor' with other popular, and often false, conceptions of woman's work.

The text begins with Mona failing her medical examinations. This does not indicate a female inability to succeed within a 'male' sphere. Rather, it provides the text with an opportunity to show the 'Lady Doctor' in a variety of different contexts. After her examination failure Mona accepts an invitation to spend six months with her cousin, Rachel Simpson, who lives in Scotland. Knowing that her cousin is 'not exactly what one would call a lady' (vol.1 p.46), Mona is shocked to discover that Rachel runs a shop and expects her to help her with the shopkeeping. Mona has romanticised her visit to her 'lower'-class cousin and imagined 'a pretty cottage embowered in roses, a simple primitive life, early dinners, occasional afternoon calls, rare tea-parties, and abundant leisure for walking, reading, thinking and dreaming on the rocks' (vol.1 pp.46-7): she has no concept of the economic or social realities of her decision to stay with Rachel. When Mona meets her cousin she discovers that she is ill-bred, vulgar, ingratiating to her social 'superiors' in the hope of attaining favour, and impractical in her running of the village shop. Through delineating Mona's reaction to her new circumstances and her status as shop

assistant the text points to the way in which negative constructions of professional middle-class women judge and define women according to a purportedly 'natural' gender hierarchy, while women at work in other spheres are judged in ways which uphold alternative social and economic hierarchies.

Acceptable codes of behaviour and official versions of the female ideal are exposed in the text as dependent upon a shared acceptance of codes of signification. Thus, a woman working in a shop must signify a member of the 'lower' classes. Just as, for some, the 'Lady Doctor' must signify neutered womanhood, the shop assistant must signify lack of social status. Mona confuses these significations. Attempts to define her, to 'dissect' her and identify her according to gender and employment status become confused: as a medical student she is not blunted by her anatomical study; as shop assistant she is not ill bred; as 'woman' she is neither traditionally 'feminine' nor shockingly 'advanced' but displays both conservative and progressive attitudes. Importantly, through her work in the shop, Mona herself comes to learn of the danger of relative codes of signification masquerading as absolute truths.

The text makes explicit the links between Mona's work in the shop and her medical training. Her relief at finding a requested piece of merchandise is the same 'that she had sometimes felt in the anatomy-room, when a nerve, of which she had given up all hope, appeared sound and entire in her dissection' (vol.1 p.165). It becomes clear that the connections between work in a shop and medicine are the text's means of 'dissecting' the way in which dominant culture prohibits or prescribes certain activities as unsuitable or suitable for women. Significantly, to her surprise, Mona finds that working in the shop is physically and mentally demanding: 'if any lady or gentleman thinks that shopkeeping is child's-play, I am prepared to show that lady or gentleman a thing or two!' (vol.1 p.166) Moreover, her change of environment and new employment are more demanding than medical study: 'the strain of settling down to these new conditions of life had taxed her nerves more than medical study and examinations had ever been able to do' (vol.1 p.202). While this usefully serves to negate the claims that women are unfit for medical work it has an added import. Implicitly, once identified as less than genteel by virtue of working in a shop, it becomes irrelevant that her work may threaten her mental and physical health.

The theoretical ideals which assert woman's incapacity to labour in the public arena as a doctor are superseded in alternative work spheres by the more compelling needs of economics/class. In the medical arena the purported

detrimental effects on the female body of anatomical training signify the need to maintain female to male difference. That is, the advantages seen to be attained by upholding definitions of female incapability which work to limit her participation in professional spheres require the denigration of female aspirations. In relation to 'lower'-class women, the advantages accrued by maintaining fixed boundaries of female and male activity are overridden by economic considerations. In the shop, Mona is named and judged, by some customers, on the grounds of her purported class: it is irrelevant that she is a *woman* at work. Alternatively, as a medical student her class status is secure but she is open to judgment in relation to a contravention of gender hierarchies. It is this contradiction which the text uses to construct its 'Lady Doctor' as acceptable.

Mona, through working in the shop, comes to see that 'nothing depends on what a man does, but that everything depends on how he does it. Even that two-penny-halfpenny shop might be a centre of culture and taste and refinement for the whole neighbourhood' (vol.2 pp.71-2). While the latter sentiment displays her desire to turn her work in the shop into a suitably refined middle-class pursuit, Mona does put her time as shop assistant to good use. She alleviates the boredom of it by buying new stock for it, decorating it, and helping her customers. The shop becomes 'the redeeming feature' (vol.2 p.206) of her life in Scotland because she has 'countless opportunities of sympathising, and helping, and planning, and economising - even of educating the tastes of the people, the least little bit - and of suggesting other ways of looking at things' (vol.2 pp.89-90).[78]

The text's links between shop work and medicine and its refutation of the assumption that shop work is necessarily 'lower' class add an interesting angle to its endorsement of the 'Lady Doctor'. While, as Thompson argues, Mona ultimately locates herself in her appropriate class, her time in the shop is part of the text's attempt to write her as an individual at ease in different spheres. In the course of the novel we see her in the dissecting-room, examination hall, shopping in London, holidaying with her upper-class relations in Switzerland, working in the shop, botanising, and enjoying her close female friendships. She resists classification and

---

78 Thompson gives a pertinent example of Mona's class-biased advice to a servant choosing a hat. However, alternatively, it is Mona's influence on Matilda (whom she first meets in the shop) which initiates the latter's decision to train as a doctor.

The second edition (1893) of the novel, and further editions, continue this quotation thus: 'And there is another side to it too. Some of those women teach me a great deal more than I could ever teach them' (p.206).

states herself that '[i]t is just as unpleasant to me to be labelled Lady Munro's niece, as to be labelled Miss Simpson's cousin. People who really care for me care for myself.' (vol.2 p.142). Importantly, it is the *male* hero's affirmation of the individuality of women which makes him a suitable partner for Mona. This should not be read as indicating that the 'Lady Doctor' can only be accepted when endorsed by male hegemony, as was the case in Thomas's *New Grooves.* Rather, it is a means of showing the benefits accrued when women and men perceive each other not in terms of simple male to female difference but in terms of individual difference.

The text's construction of Ralph Dudley, its male doctor and hero, shows both Dudley's understanding of heterogeneity *and* his need, too, to overcome an internalisation of cultural significations of social status. Dudley has his own 'ideal' of woman but it is not one which limits her for the convenience of men:

> All women attracted him who in any respect or in any degree approached his ideal; the devoted wife and mother, the artist, the beautiful dancer, the severe student, the capable housewife, the eloquent platform speaker, - in all of these he saw different manifestations of the eternal idea of womanhood, and he never thought of demanding that one woman should in herself combine the characteristics of all. He was content to take each one for what she was, and to enjoy her in that capacity. (vol.1 pp.250-1)

Importantly, Dudley believes that 'the fundamental mistake of our civilisation has been educating women as if they were all run in one mould' (vol.2 p.193): that is, he perceives women as individuals. He finds his reading of women problematised, however, when he encounters Mona Maclean the shop assistant. Unaware of her true status, he quickly comes to appreciate her fine qualities and perceives her as his mental and emotional equal. Yet, what if, he later wonders, she is tainted by her relation with Rachel Simpson? To align himself with a woman from a different social background would be to risk ridicule should that 'taint' (vol.2 p.178) become apparent in Mona's behaviour. Conveniently, of course, Mona is really thoroughly middle-class. However, Dudley's struggle to displace his conditioned response to a 'provincial shop-girl' (vol.2 p.184) is successful and he makes the decision to ask her to marry him still believing she works permanently in a shop. This is important, for his decision is based on his correct 'dissection' of her individual character. Now '[h]e had ceased to regret that Mona was a shopkeeper' even if 'he was not too much in love to be glad that she was a good shopkeeper' (vol.3. p.12). Importantly, as yet ignorant of Dudley's intentions towards her, Mona acknowledges to herself that 'it would be a fine test of a man's sincerity to see

whether he would be willing to take me simply and solely as I am now - as Rachel Simpson's assistant' (vol.3 p.13).

Conveniently, of course, Mona Maclean has more in common with her wealthy upper-class relations. Rachel Simpson is exposed as only a distant relation and her emigration to America ensures Mona's alliance with the vulgar end of her family is temporary. However, ironically, Ralph's discovery that Mona Maclean, the shop girl, is also Mona Maclean, the medical student, causes him as much anxiety as that created by his confusion over her presence in the shop. This is not because he is opposed to medical women but because he feels deceived by the Mona who has now won the gold medal in physiology and passed her second year examinations. By the close of the text, however, his understanding of the multifaceted nature of womanhood is forcibly reiterated as a prime motivating factor in his love for Mona. In explaining how many things he has yet to learn about Mona, Dudley compares her to a Gothic cathedral: 'its very beauty lies in the fact that one is always adding to it, but it is never finished' (vol.3 p.281). He concludes: 'I never know whom I shall find when I meet you, - the high-souled philosopher, the earnest student, the brilliant woman of the world, the tender mother-soul, the frivolous girl, or the lovable child. I don't know which of them charms me most.' (vol.3 p.281) Further, they both complete their medical studies, get married, agree that it is unhealthy for a woman to obey her husband, decline to practise in Harley Street and set up a practice together in a poor district. Their marriage signifies not an ending but a beginning, not the apex of female fulfilment but the starting point for the mutual development of their individual talents. While both *Many Daughters* and *Sweethearts and Friends* suggest that their heroines continue to work after marriage, this is not directly portrayed. The closure of Todd's text, however, is not Ralph and Mona's marriage. The novel ends with a distressed girl arriving at their practice. The young girl:

> looked at him [Ralph] for a moment, and tried to speak, but her full lips quivered, and she burst into hysterical tears.
> His practised eye ran over her figure half unconsciously.
> 'I think,' he said, kindly, 'you would rather see the doctor who shares my practice,' and he rose, and opened the door.
> Mona looked up smiling.
> She was sitting alone in the firelight, and his heart glowed within him as he contrasted her bright, strong, womanly face with - that other. 'Mona, dear,' he said, quietly, 'here is a case for *you*.' (vol.3 p.285)

This final affirmation of the 'Lady Doctor' effectively ends the debate over the dissecting-room. 'Blunted' womanhood is linked not with the medical woman but with the female patient who requires her help.[79]

5.5 Summary

Mona Maclean: Medical Student, like the other texts discussed in this chapter, is by no means a radical novel. Nonetheless, as do Keddie's, Edmonds's and Tuttiet's texts, it does provide a partially challenging interjection and negotiation into/of educational and medical discourse. All four novels end with their main female protagonists marrying. Yet this does not undermine the preceding delineations of alternative forms of female fulfilment. Further, each text refuses to compromise its approbation of the 'Girton Girl' or 'Lady Doctor' by offsetting her achievements against negative consequences. Each of the four novels, using different narrative strategies, attempts to deconstruct negative stereotyped inscriptions of the 'Girton Girl' or 'Lady Doctor' through reconstructing her as an autonomous individual. Delia Wentworth negates a gendered division of skills through embracing cookery and mathematics as spheres where female talent may be located. Mary Myles resists classification and gains fulfilment through a successful career. Amy Langton appropriates the male 'right' to diagnose. Mona Maclean challenges assumptions about suitable spheres of work for women. All four heroines defy populist notions of women's lack of individuality/autonomy and lack of difference to other women. The anxieties and ambivalences generated by the overt way in which these 'Girton Girls' and 'Lady Doctors' contravene Victorian hegemony result in attempts to retain a degree of propriety and convention in all four texts. In all but *Sweethearts and Friends* this is effected through recourse to often facile inscriptions of the innately Christian nature of the heroines. In Tuttiet's novel it is effected largely through the humour of the text which sometimes has the effect of undermining the novel's polemic. In each novel the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' can only be validated because she retains her acceptably 'feminine' character. Nonetheless, in all four texts the promotion of the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' as an individual rather than a type does enable an engagement with the

79 Swenson offers an interesting discussion of the novel's ending in relation to its construction of maternity in *Treating a Sick Culture: Victorian Fictions of Medical Women*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa 1995.

ways in which the opening of higher education, medically and generally, provided alternative, positive means for women to read and write womanhood.

Chapter 6

6. Conclusion

The fictional constructions of the 'Lady Doctor' and 'Girton Girl' analysed in this thesis were discursive interjections into the wider debate about the role and function of woman within the Victorian period. By their very existence the higher educated woman and the medical woman could not avoid transgressing the complicated and conflicting ideologies embedded in concepts of both gender and individuality within the period. The production of fictional versions of the 'Girton Girl' and the 'Lady Doctor' was, thus, a response and reaction to/against actual historical change. Yet the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' did not disappear after the Victorian period. By the end of the Victorian period the phenomena of the educated and working middle-class woman had lost their initial shock value and other concerns related to gender dominated public consciousness; principally the issue of female suffrage. Most versions of the 'Lady Doctor' and 'Girton Girl' in Edwardian fiction produced by women suggest a widespread acceptance of the changes in educational opportunities for women; some retain ambivalence about the educated woman; a few use the figure of the 'Girton Girl' or 'Lady Doctor' as a means of treating other subjects in a radical mode.[1]

While most Edwardian novels featuring versions of the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' find nothing contentious *per se* in according their heroines education or a medical career, the issue of marriage remains central to many of the texts. Interestingly, often 'Girton Girls' and 'Lady Doctors' are denied marital happiness. Constance E. Bishop's *A Vision Splendid* (1919), Elizabeth Harden's *The Spindle* (1912), V.I. Longman's *Harvest* (1913), Frances Marshall's *The Harp of Life* (1908), Amy Reynolds's *The Grey Terrace* (1912) and Margaret L. Woods's *The Invader* (1907) all contain acceptable versions of the 'Girton Girl' or 'Lady Doctor'; none of the texts sees a need to provide justification for according their heroines a college education or medical degree. Yet none of these texts permits their heroines a happy union with the man they love. Thus, the efficaciousness of higher education or medical training is no longer an issue but a career/education and a happy marriage are written as incompatible. Moreover, ironically, in the texts featuring 'Lady Doctors' the heroines yearn for love and marriage but it is assumed by others that *because* they are doctors they are uninterested in romance.

---

1 I follow the usual literary practice of referring to the period between 1902-1920 as Edwardian.

Bishop's *A Vision Splendid* denies its heroine happiness in love as a punishment for her scheming character. Clytie King trains as a doctor and works in India in a women's hospital. She is in love with Philip Vaughan but he believes her to be 'a woman devoted heart and soul to her profession; a feminist'.[2] He does not return her feelings. Clytie is ejected from the text through death by snake-bite. The novel as a whole displays little interest in her medical training or work. On the other hand, Clemency O'Flinn, in *The Spindle*, is portrayed as naturally inclined to a medical career. She trains as a doctor and looks forward to a prosperous and rewarding career in London. Instead, after the death of her father she returns home to take over his meagre and uninspiring country practice: this enables her to support her family. While irritated by assumptions that as a doctor she is uninterested in love, she self-sacrificially ensures that the man she has loved for many years marries another woman: she remains unmarried but virtuous at the close of the text. Similarly, Dr Jeanne Meynell in *The Grey Terrace* is in love with her younger friend, Dr Keith Trent. She too self-sacrificially enables him to be reconciled with another woman. The text endorses its 'Lady Doctor' by vehemently asserting her womanliness: 'If Dr Meynell is a fair specimen, then a woman who is a doctor is not less, but more womanly than the rest.'[3] Yet it refuses to allow her both a career and marriage.

Longman's *Harvest* features Hasil, the daughter of an Indian woman and an English man. Hasil's mother dies in childbirth and she is brought up by her father. He deliberately conceals from her the fact that her mother was a 'native' woman. After her father's death, Hasil comes to England to live with her aunt and uncle. She resolves to go to college and successfully gains a place at the imaginary St Frideswide's, Oxford. The text provides details of her enjoyment of college life and her college friendships.[4] At no point is it intimated that higher education for women

---

2 Constance E. Bishop, *A Vision Splendid*, London 1919, p.256.

3 Mrs Fred Reynolds [Amy Reynolds], *The Grey Terrace*, London 1912, p.191.

4 Jane Eldridge Miller in *Rebel Women: Feminism, Modernism and the Edwardian Novel*, London 1994, p.216, states that communities for single women, such as colleges, are not evident in the Edwardian fiction she has studied. She gives Margaret L. Woods's *The Invader* as one of few exceptions. In fact, there are quite a few examples of texts by women in this period with scenes set in college. These include *Harvest* and Mrs George De Horne Vaizey's [Jessie Mansergh] *A College Girl* (1913). An anonymous novel, *In Statu Pupillari* (1908) is also set in a women's college. Sobal in *Treating a Sick Culture: A Literary View of Professional Medical Women*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cincinnati 1984, makes a similar incorrect contention about the absence of medical women in Edwardian fiction.

is damaging or dangerous: indeed, Hasil has a brilliant mind. Unfortunately, she is disappointed in love: her fiancé breaks off their engagement when informed that her mother was a 'native' woman. Her studies then suffer. Whereas once '[s]he had originality', now her academic work shows '[n]o flavour - no individuality '.[5] Instead of the first-class degree she was expected to attain, she manages only a third. Instead of marrying the man she loves, she marries a clergyman, Clement Dale, who has decidedly Victorian views on God, marriage and women. Hasil cannot find happiness with him and the novel closes with her suicide.

Marshall's *The Harp of Life* features Lucy Gaskell, a Newnham scholarship student. However, unlike Marshall's earlier fiction set in Cambridge, this text displays virtually no interest in women's higher education. Newnham seems to be a convenient but unnecessary backdrop in a novel more concerned to delineate the evils of the roman catholic church. Lucy, like Hasil, is disappointed in love: her fiancé breaks off their engagement in order to become a priest. The novel is most bizarre in its portrayal of a roman catholic convent in Cambridge: this all-female community appears to serve as a displaced version of Newnham. While Lucy happily attends college, the nuns are depicted as repressed by the church and unnaturally denied the beauties of love and sexual passion. However, like the nuns, Lucy remains unmarried at the close of the text. Woods's *The Invader* also locates its heroine at a higher education college, this time in Oxford. Milly Flaxman already has a first in Greats and is hoping for the same in Mods. After being hypnotised by a college friend she finds herself invaded by Mildred, her 'more brilliant and attractive' and more wicked 'other' self. [6] Although she manages to attain a first-class degree and gets married to a university lecturer, her life is spoiled by Mildred: the latter begins to dominate Milly and behaves in ways which she finds outrageous. Milly prevails over her counterpart only by committing suicide.

These acceptable versions of the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' do not make an explicit link between the unhappiness of their heroines and their education/career. Nonetheless, the refusal to permit them a happy marital ending does imply that they cannot be permitted to attain both knowledge and contentment. 'Lady Doctor' and 'Girton Girl' texts from this period which *do* accord their heroines a marital ending problematise their careers/education in alternative

5 V.I. Longman, *Harvest*, London 1913, p.213. The link between concepts of individuality/originality and gender ideologies is still apparent in several other texts discussed in this chapter. For further examples see pp.229-32 below.

6 Margaret L. Woods, *The Invader*, London 1922 [second edition, first published 1908], p.63.

modes. Lillias Campbell Davidson's *The Lost Millionaire* (1908) and Katharine Tynan's *Kitty Aubrey* (1909) both feature acceptable versions of medical heroines; both, however, undertake work 'inferior' to their training. Dr Violet Bramley in *The Lost Millionaire* sets up a medical practice only to find no one will consult a 'Lady Doctor'. She then takes a job as a glorified nurse-maid looking after a baby. When the baby disappears in mysterious circumstances, the 'Lady Doctor' refuses to accept he is dead. Maxwell Suter is convinced by her reasoning and most of the novel is concerned with his detection of the mystery. Once the child is found and the criminal plot uncovered, Violet and Maxwell marry: now the 'Lady Doctor' is 'no longer Dr Violet, but Mrs Violet'.[7] Thus, while the text does not condemn Dr Bramley's choice of career, and while it writes her as a womanly woman, it is relieved to deny her the appellation 'Dr' by its close. Further, *The Lost Millionaire* provides no discussion of, or even rationale for, her decision to train as a doctor. Alternatively, the eponymous 'Lady Doctor' *Kitty Aubrey* has a vocation. She states that 'the doctor is born in me'.[8] Her ambition is to set up a medical practice and to have a ' Benz motor-car ... to own and drive herself' (p.156). Instead, once qualified she too takes up a post 'inferior' to her professional capabilities: she successfully heals the rift between her father and grandfather by taking a job as carer for the latter. By the close of the text she finds happiness in marriage and continues to undertake some doctoring. However, while the text fully approves of its doctor heroine, it displays scant interest in her training or work and is more concerned with her duty to her family and her love life.

Mrs Victor Rickard's *Cathy Rossiter* (1919) also accords its heroine a marital ending. However, Dr Monica Henstock is punished for her wickedness through marriage to a scoundrel: this evil 'Lady Doctor' suggests the inadvisability of letting women practise medicine. From the beginning of the text it is intimated that Monica is an unsavoury character. We are informed that her medical training has enabled her 'to dwell upon the ugly, dangerous side of things'.[9] However, like the 'Lady Doctors' in Bishop's and Reynolds's texts, she too longs for a life of love. She wants to marry Jack Lorrimer. He marries her friend Cathy Rossiter. When Cathy has a nasty fall and loses her baby, Dr Monica treats her. She prescribes complete rest

---

7 Lillias Campbell Davidson, *The Lost Millionaire*, London 1908, p.342.

8 Katharine Tynan, *Kitty Aubrey*, London 1909, p.138. All further quotations are from this edition and will be referred to in the main text by page number.

9 Mrs Victor Rickard, *Cathy Rossiter*, London 1919, p.5. All further quotations are from this edition and will be referred to in the main text by page number.

and quiet for a protracted period of time, ignoring her patient's wish to get up. Through a series of misunderstandings, some of them wilful, Cathy is thought to be having an affair with another man; to be suicidal; and, finally, to be mad. While she is in disgrace and confined to her room at the insistence of the 'Lady Doctor', Monica and Jack begin to flirt with each other. Eventually, with Monica's connivance, Cathy is admitted against her will to a mental asylum. The 'Lady Doctor' subsequently begins a sexual relationship with Jack. Cathy is eventually rescued by friends and Monica admits to Jack that 'I certified her because you said you wanted an end to the strain. Cathy may have been unbalanced at the time, and she was certainly very ill, but I never believed her to be mad' (p.309). Cathy finds love with another man and magnanimously forgives Jack and Monica. The 'Lady Doctor's' medical career is totally ruined and her marriage to Jack becomes a punishment for her sins.

One further Edwardian version of a 'Lady Doctor' is of particular interest in its treatment of marriage: Marie Harrison's *The Woman Alone* (1914) features a 'Lady Doctor' who has no desire for love and marriage but does want to experience motherhood. Dr Joan Halbury has a successful medical practice in the east end of London. Although repulsed by the thought of sexual intercourse, she begins to experience the overwhelming urge to have a baby. While attending a series of lectures in France organised by the Union of Individualists, she deliberately engineers a situation where Arthur Ironside seduces her. The next day she returns to London. In the later stages of pregnancy she again travels to France to have her baby. Befriended by a roman catholic priest she finds her decision to have sexual relations with a man in order to get pregnant condoned - on the grounds that motherhood is a noble aspiration. Once her daughter is born she returns to London and continues her career. Ironically, Ironside's fiancée, Irene, visits the 'Lady Doctor' for advice about an unspecified gynaecological problem. Once married, Irene tells her husband of her friend, the 'Lady Doctor', who has a baby. Horrified, he visits Dr Joan and is informed that she wants neither his money nor his help: the baby is hers. On discovering the father of Joan's child to be her husband, Irene feels betrayed. She cannot understand that Joan's overwhelming urge to have a child led her to have sexual intercourse with a man she did not love. The 'Lady Doctor' resolves to leave her medical practice and England to avoid hurting Irene further. The novel closes with a last minute reprieve: Irene sends word that she is pregnant and as a mother-to-be now understands Dr Joan's feelings.

These details of the 'Lady Doctor's' unconventional ideas on motherhood are juxtaposed with the story of a married couple, Peter and Dorothy. Both enjoy their work as journalists. Dorothy, unlike Joan, is not repulsed by sexual intercourse. She *is* repulsed by the idea of having a baby. Dorothy and Peter support Joan in her unconventional decision; Joan supports Dorothy in her renunciation of motherhood: 'Well not all of us were intended to become mothers. It would be just as artificial and wrong of a woman to become a mother unwillingly, as it would be for a woman to refuse maternity who simply longed for it. It's just a method of developing what is the real self.'[10] The text fully endorses both the 'Lady Doctor's' career and her planned pregnancy as the rational choices of an individualised woman.

There are also examples of Edwardian texts by women featuring versions of the 'Girton Girl' which problematise love, marriage, education and careers. They include Irene Burn's *Generous Gods* (1908), Claire De Pratz's *Elisabeth Davenay* (1909), and Myrtle B.S. Jackson's *Kate Mitchell* (1914). Burn's text charts the progress of its heroine from college student to career woman to wife and mother. Cassandra Fallowfield attains her degree from an imaginary mixed college, St Crispin's. Indeed, comically, a family friend comments that 'I should think Girton far better; the lady students are shut up there, and can't get into mischief'.[11] After leaving college, Cassandra begins work as a teacher in a school which trains girls for marriage. Her enthusiastic teaching of classics is unappreciated. She subsequently leaves this stultifying job and attempts a career as a writer. This fails. She then marries her friend Stephen Holywell. They do not love each other. Six years later she has two children and is ground down by domesticity: 'I don't think the hardest [Greek] chorus would daunt me now, it is housekeeping that takes all the backbone out of me, it is so utterly futile. Never teach a girl Greek, if you want her to marry a poor man and take an interest in her Kitchen.' (p.136) She has more to suffer. Her husband leaves her for another woman, then dies. Charlotte Kinsey, an old college friend, rescues Cassandra from her subsequent depression and gets her interested in studying again. However, the narrator tells us that even plain Charlotte would give up her freedom and work for a baby and love. Cassandra is finally accorded happiness through Mr Hope who has loved her since she was a

10 Marie Harrison, *The Woman Alone*, London 1914, p.246.

11 Irene Burn, *Generous Gods*, London 1908, p.55. All further quotations are from this edition and will be referred to in the main text by page number.

student. Burn's text does not suggest that higher education is damaging or write it as unwomanly. It is unambivalent about Cassandra's academic and intellectual capabilities. However, the text also forcibly writes romantic love as the true key to happiness.

De Pratz's and Jackson's texts are also concerned with love and marriage but deal with them in more interesting ways. The eponymous Elisabeth Davenay is a self-proclaimed feminist. She has a college degree and a job as professeur at a lycée in France. She gives up the latter to work for *La Révolte*, a daily feminist newspaper.[12] Importantly, Elisabeth's feminism is accompanied by femininity.[13] Her friend Ethel Paget - Girton educated - is a type of the third sex 'being neither male nor female in special attributes'.[14] Elisabeth, on the other hand, dresses elegantly and has a 'feminine love' (p.3) for pretty things. In the course of the text, Elisabeth's feminist principles come into conflict with her 'feminine' impulses: she falls in love with a man. Aware that if she marries him she 'will have no real individuality' (p.250) she undergoes an inner battle between 'the newer, conscious woman who is striving to assert her own individuality ... and the old atavistic woman' (p.285). Elisabeth believes that women need emancipating from male sexual will and need the right 'to dispose of and to own [their] individual person[s]' (p.265). She relinquishes love and resolves to move to England to work for a feminist newspaper. The text approvingly makes the desire to retain female individuality the key to its heroine's renunciation of marriage.

Kate Mitchell in Jackson's text is also college educated. In the course of the novel she works in a public high school; lectures at a teacher training college; acts as vice-principal for a Hall for foreign students; writes an arithmetic text book which is adopted by all high schools; discovers the existence of a new star; publishes essays on education; attains a lectureship at G-, where she went to college, and ends up its Mistress.[15] Her career is rewarding to herself and beneficial to others. She is finally accorded marriage. In a strategy similar to Edmonds's in *Mary Myles,*

---

12 The novel is set in the 1890s. An anarchist newspaper entitled *La Révolte* was published in Paris from 1887-1894. For further details see Eugenia W. Herbert, *The Artist and Social Reform: France and Belgium, 1885-1898*, New Haven 1961.

13 Miller in *op.cit.*, pp.136-8 provides a pertinent discussion of this text and its limitations.

14 Claire De Pratz, *Elisabeth Davenay*, London 1909, p.259. All further quotations are from this edition and will be referred to in the main text by page number.

15 All of Kate's other jobs are at imaginary institutions. The use of 'G-' suggests a real college – Girton.

A Study, the ending of her engagement when she is a young woman enables her to pursue a fulfilling career. While the closure of the text depicts her happily married to the man she has always loved, the prologue to the novel informs the reader that this is the story of a female scholar who is 'a living, breathing, human, absolutely modern woman ... who in her own way left her mark on education.'[16] Again, there is no suggestion that higher education is damaging or dangerous to women. Instead, her higher education enables Kate to find personal fulfilment through her work.

Of the texts discussed thus far, only *Cathy Rossiter* makes a link between education (here, medical) and dangerous womanhood. Even those texts promoting marriage as woman's genuine fulfilment do not decry the opening of medicine or higher education to women. This suggests that by the end of the Victorian period controversy over the opening of these spheres to women had to an extent given way to other concerns. Indeed, it was quite common for texts concerned with wider issues to accord their heroines a higher education. Katherine Roberts's *Some Pioneers and a Prison* (1913) is a suffragette novel which contains four suffragettes: a Nurse, a Married Woman, a Grass Widow and a 'Girton Girl'. According to Karmela Bélinki, the 'Girton Girl' joins the suffrage campaign for rational reasons and helps to convert to the cause the Married Woman's husband.[17] May Sinclair's *The Tree of Heaven* (1917) features a heroine who has a first-class degree in economics from Newnham and who goes to prison as a consequence of her suffrage campaigning. However, the text is equally interested in wider issues, such as the start of the first world war. Interestingly, as Glenda Norquay points out, the text 'places the collectivism of the suffrage movement in the context of other "mass" identifications that threaten to draw the characters into a "vortex", destroying their individuality'.[18]

Mrs Humphry Ward's *The War and Elizabeth* (1918) also features a university-educated heroine. Elizabeth Bremerton has a degree from Somerville and her intellectual capabilities are lauded throughout the text. She also has many other skills including a training in accountancy. She works as a private secretary for a country Squire who refuses to participate in the war effort. The patriotic Elizabeth persuades him to let her oversee the management of his estate so that food and

16 Myrtle B.S. Jackson, *Kate Mitchell*, London 1914, p.ix.

17 Karmela Bélinki, *Women's Suffrage and Fiction in England 1905-1914: Facts and Visions*, Helsinki 1984, pp.136-7. Unfortunately, I was unable to locate a copy of this novel.

18 Glenda Norquay, *Voices and Votes: A Literary Anthology of the Women's Suffrage Campaign*, Manchester 1995, p.270.

timber can be produced. By the close of the text the Squire is converted to her viewpoint. Storm Jameson's *The Pot Boils* (1919) also features a college-educated heroine. Athenais Garain attends a northern university and comes out top of the English honours list. She later attends the London School of Economics. Athenais is a most modern heroine who has sexual relations prior to marriage with a fellow student. However, interestingly, the text depicts male students and professors decrying the advent of women to the universities. Thus, a professor of economics longs for the days before the arrival of 'earnest females in large numbers'.[19] A professor of philosophy maintains that his women students work hard but lack originality - 'a well bred parrot could have written their papers' (p.48). A male student wonders what women get out of college. These negative judgments about women students are offset later in the text by Athenais's impassioned support for 'the hundreds of thousands of women - some in suffrage and socialist societies, some not out of college, and some - like me - just females at large, who can never get back into kitchens' (p.191). Moreover, the novel as a whole depicts a group of radical but somewhat cynical characters attempting to find their place in a bewildering age of 'isms' and reform movements.

These fictional constructions of the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' suggest both an acceptance of the changes effected by the earlier pioneers and a continuing interest/anxiety in/about the impact of them. Further, Susan Leonardi's study of six women novelists writing in the 1920s and 1930s suggests that the threat embodied by the educated woman continued to provoke anxiety. Leonardi considers the writing of six women who studied at Somerville who all produced texts containing versions of the educated woman. Leonardi argues that the association and production of knowledge with/by women was perceived as a threat to a male power base.[20] It is also evident that the figure of the woman doctor continued to provoke dissent in the 1920s. According to E. Moberly Bell, several hospitals offering clinical training to medical students again closed their doors to women in the 1920s: for example, St Mary's Hospital (1924) and King's College,

---

19 Storm Jameson, *The Pot Boils*, London 1919, p.15. All further quotations are from this edition and will be referred to in the main text by page number.

20 See Susan J. Leonardi, *Dangerous By Degrees. Women at Oxford and the Somerville College Novelists*, New Brunswick 1988. Leonardi considers the fiction of Vera Brittain, Winifred Holtby, Muriel Jaeger, Margaret Kennedy, and Doreen Wallace. See also Dyhouse, *No Distinction of Sex? Women in British Universities 1870-1939*, London 1995 for a comprehensive analysis of the status of women students and academics in the first four decades of the twentieth century.

Charing Cross and Westminster Hospitals (1928).[21] Presumably this was a backlash against working women in a period of high unemployment.

A continuing unease about women's movement from the home to the workplace and/or college clearly still existed in the first decades of the twentieth century. Despite this, it was in the Victorian period that the battle over middle-class women's right to previously male privileges of higher education and medical training was won. Thus, while fictional figures of the 'Girton Girl' and 'Lady Doctor' continued to interject and negotiate with early twentieth-century gender ideologies, it was their Victorian prototypes who embodied the hopes, anxieties, and ambivalences generated by the debate over women's right to a college education or medical career; and hence, their right to proclaim their autonomy, individuality and/or originality.

21 See E. [Enid] Moberley Bell, *Storming the Citadel: The Rise of the Woman Doctor*, London 1953, p.174.

APPENDIX

Biographical Details

Brief details on the women writers whose novels are considered in detail in the thesis are provided below. Details for all but Alice Stronach are from Virginia Blain, Patricia Clements and Isobel Grundy (eds), *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English: Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present*, London 1990. Details about Stronach are from the Scottish Register of Births, *The British Library Catalogue* and the *Newnham College Register 1871-1950*, Cambridge 1979.

Elizabeth Mayhew Edmonds (Waller) fl. 1881-1910
Little is known of her life. She wrote three novels, published a volume of poetry, reminiscences of her solo journeys to Athens, and many classical scholarly works and translations.

Annie Edward(e)s (Jones) *c.* 1830 - 1896
Little is known of her life. She married John Edwards and had one son. She wrote 21 novels. From 1871 onwards she published under the name Edwardes to avoid confusion with Amelia Edwards.

Anne Elliot fl. 1883 - 1912?
Little is known of her life. *Dr Edith Romney* was her first novel. Later novels also feature heroines who are unconventional. She probably lived with her sister, who also wrote novels.

Hilda Caroline Gregg 1868 - 1933
Born in Gloucestershire, she was the daughter of Sarah Frances and Rev. John Gregg. Her sister, Katharine, was a doctor. Gregg first worked as a teacher and then turned to writing. She published novels set in exotic, usually 'Eastern' locales and wrote under the name of 'Sydney C. Grier'. She died in Eastbourne.

Henrietta Keddie 1826? - 1914
She was born in Fife, daughter of a mine-owner. She ran a school with her two sisters and began writing in the 1850s. Her publications were under her own name and her pseudonym 'Sarah Tytler'. In 1869 she moved from Scotland to London where she mixed with other women writers. She also adopted a daughter, lived on the continent and later in Oxford. Her novel output was prolific. She also wrote a life of Queen Victoria.

Arabella Kenealy 1864 - 1938
Daughter of Elizabeth (Nicklin) and E.V. Kenealy, a lawyer. She trained as a doctor at the London School of Medicine for Women. She practised medicine in Watford until she suffered from diptheria in 1894. She wrote numerous novels and several medical treatises, including *Feminism and Sex Extinction* (1920).

Eliza Lynn Linton 1822 - 1898
Daughter of Charlotte (Goodenough) and Rev. James Lynn, she was born in Cumberland. She went to London in 1845 and found work as a journalist. Her first novel was published in 1846. She married William James Linton in 1858 and later separated from him. She was virulently anti-feminist, despite her own working life. Probably the most well-known writer considered in this thesis, there is now a

growing amount of critical interest in her writing. See Nancy Fix Anderson's biography and Valerie Sanders's study of anti-feminist Victorian women writers for further details.

Elizabeth Thomasina Meade 1854 - 1914
She was born in Cork, daughter of Rev R.T. Meade. She married Toulmin Smith, moved to London and had three children. She wrote nearly 300 novels for adults and children and was editor of *Atalanta*.

Emily Frances Adeline Sergeant 1851 - 1904
Daughter of Jane Hall and Richard Sergeant, she was born in Derbyshire. She was educated at Queen's College, London and worked as a governess for ten years. She wrote over 90 novels, published poetry and was involved in adult education.

Alice Laing Stronach 1862 - 19??
She was born in Edinburgh and went to Newnham in 1887. She left after one year without taking her Tripos. She worked as an assistant mistress at an elementary school on Mull between 1897 and 1904. As well as *A Newnham Friendship*, she co-authored a novel with Mary Pendered (*The Champion* 1902), translated into English a Danish text and published a book on English Literature.

Annie Thomas 1838 - 1918
Daughter of a Lieutenant, she took up writing after his death to support herself. She married Rev. Pender Cudlip in 1867. She continued writing novels until the 1890s, publishing over 60 of them. She also edited a holiday quarterly.

Margaret Todd 1859 - 1918
She was born in Scotland, daughter of a businessman. She trained as a doctor at the Edinburgh School of Medicine for Women and worked in Edinburgh. Todd was a friend of Sophia Jex-Blake and her biography of her was published in 1918. In the same year, Todd committed suicide. Her first two novels were written using the pseudonym 'Graham Travers' but her last two novels and her collection of short stories were published under her own name.

Mary Gleed Tuttiet[t?] 1847 - 1923
Little is known of her life. Daughter of Eliza Gleed and F.B. Tuttiet, she was born on the Isle of Wight. As well as novels she also published poetry.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The bibliography is divided into four sections:
i) Novels referred to in the thesis. This includes novels referred to only in a footnote or the appendix.
ii) Archive material consulted.
iii) Periodicals and newspapers consulted.
iv) Other works consulted.

Novels referred to in the thesis:

Alexander, Major-General G.G.
[George Gardiner]
Doctor Victoria, London 1881

Allen, Grant
The Woman Who Did, London 1895

Anon.
In Statu Pupillari, London 1907

Bishop, Constance E.
A Vision Splendid, London 1919

Burn, Irene
Generous Gods, London 1908

Cox, Emily
Courtship and Chemicals, London n.d. [1898?]

Cross, Margaret B.
Love and Olivia: Being the Sentimental Troubles of a Clever Woman, London 1899

Davidson, Lillias Campbell
The Lost Millionaire, London 1908

De Pratz, Claire
Elisabeth Davenay, London 1909

Edmonds, Mrs [Elizabeth Mayhew]
Mary Myles, A Study, London 1888

Edwardes, Annie
A Bluestocking, London 1877

A Girton Girl, London 1885

Elliot, Anne
Dr Edith Romney, London 1883

'Gray, Maxwell' [Tuttiet, Mary Gleed]
Sweethearts and Friends: A Story of the Seventies, London 1897

Gregg, Hilda
See 'Grier, Sydney C.'

'Grier, Sydney C.' [Gregg, Hilda]
Peace with Honour, Edinburgh 1897

Harden, Elizabeth
The Spindle, London 1912

Harrison, Marie
The Woman Alone, London 1914

Jackson, Myrtle B.S.
Kate Mitchell, London 1914

Jameson, Storm
The Pot Boils, London 1919

Johnstone, Edith
A Sunless Heart, London 1894

Keddie, Henrietta
See 'Tytler, Sarah'

Kenealy, Arabella
Dr Janet of Harley Street, London 1893

Longman, V.I.
Harvest, London 1913

Lynn Linton, Eliza
The One Too Many, London 1894

Marshall, Frances
See 'St Aubyn, Alan'

Meade, L.T. [Elizabeth Thomasina]
The Medicine Lady, London 1892

Pendered, Mary
Dust and Laurels: A Study in Nineteenth Century Womanhood, London 1893

Pendered, Mary and Stronach, Alice
The Champion, London 1902

Reade, Charles
A Woman-Hater, Edinburgh 1877

Reynolds, Mrs Fred [Amy]
The Grey Terrace, London 1912

Rickard, Mrs Victor
Cathy Rossiter, London 1919

Roberts, Katherine
Some Pioneers and a Prison, London 1913

Sergeant, Adeline
No Ambition, Edinburgh 1895

Sinclair, May
The Tree of Heaven, London 1917

'St Aubyn, Alan' [Marshall, Frances]
The Harp of Life, London 1908

The Junior Dean, London 1891

The Master of St Benedict's, London 1893

A Proctor's Wooing, London 1897

Stronach, Alice
A Newnham Friendship, London 1901

Swan, Annie S.
Elizabeth Glen, M.B.: The Experiences of a Lady Doctor, London 1895

Mrs. Keith Hamilton, M.B.: More Experiences of Elizabeth Glen, London 1897

Thomas, Annie
New Grooves, London 1871

Todd, Margaret
See 'Travers, Graham'

'Travers, Graham' [Todd, Margaret]
Mona Maclean: Medical Student, London 1892

Mona Maclean: Medical Student, London 1893 [second edition]

Tuttiet, Mary Gleed
See 'Gray, Maxwell'

Tynan, Katharine
Kitty Aubrey, London 1909

'Tytler, Sarah' [Keddie, Henrietta]
Many Daughters, London 1900

Vaizey, Mrs George De Horne
[Mansergh, Jessie]
A College Girl, London 1913

Ward, Mrs Humphry [Mary Augusta]
The War and Elizabeth, London 1918

Woods, Margaret L.
The Invader, London 1922 [second edition]

Archive material consulted:

Fawcett Library
Letters of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson 1860-65

The Royal Free Hospital
Magazine of the London School of Medicine for Women and the Royal Free Hospital, 1895-9. Details of relevant articles are provided below under 'Periodicals and newspapers consulted'.

Minutes of the Governors' Meetings at the London School of Medicine for Women 1875-9

Press Cuttings Books 1-8

Reports of the London School of Medicine for Women 1875-1908, London 1875 etc.

Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine
Archives of the Medical Women's Federation

Periodicals and newspapers consulted:

'Æsculapia'
'Women's Work in Medicine', *The Lady's Realm*, 6, (7/1899), 282-87

Alderley, H.M. Stanley of
'Personal Recollections of Women's Education', *Nineteenth Century*, 6, (8/1879), 308-321

Amos, Sarah M.
'The Evolution of the Daughters', *Contemporary Review*, 65, (4/1894), 515-520

Anon.
'Admission of Women to Academical Degrees', *The Lancet*, 2, (24/10/1863), 486-7

'The Admission of Women to the Medical Degrees of the University of London', *The Lancet*, 1, (7/4/1877), 505

'British Medical Association. Fifty-fourth Annual Meeting, Held at Brighton, 1886', *The Lancet*, 2, (14/8/1886), 313-320

Anon.

'The Delhi Female Medical Mission', *Medical Missions at Home and Abroad: The Quarterly Magazine of the Medical Missionary Association*, 1, (1/1879), 47

'Dr Edith', *Argosy*, 41, (6/1886), 472-479

'Editorial', *Medical Times and Gazette*, 2, (19/11/1870), 606

'Female Doctors', *The Lancet*, 2, (2/8/1873), 159-60

'Female Candidates for the License of the Apothecary Society', *Medical Times and Gazette*, 1, (23/2/1867), 199

'Female Education', *The Lancet*, 1, (20/6/1874), 880-1

'Female Education', *Quarterly Review*, 126, (4/1869), 448-479

'Female Medical Missionaries For India', *Medical Missions at Home and Abroad: The Quarterly Magazine of the Medical Missionary Society*, 1, (10/1882), 285-9

'The Female Medical School', *The Lancet*, 2, (24/10/1874), 596-98

' "Female Medical Society": The First English School of Medicine for Women', *Alexandra Magazine*, 2, (6/1865), 323-7

'Female Medical Students', *Medical Times and Gazette*, 2, (26/11/1870), 629

'Female Physicians', *The Lancet*, 1, (30/5/1863), 613-14

'Feminine Wranglers', *Saturday Review*, 18, (23/7/1864), 111-2

'Girton College', *Leisure Hour*, 25, (11/1876), 715-17

'Girton College in 1885', *Westminster Review*, 68, n.s., (7/1885), 72-9

'Husbands', *Saturday Review*, 18, (1/10/1864), 416-7

'The Influence of University Degrees on the Education of Women', *Victoria Magazine*, 1, (7/1863), 260-271

'Introduction', *Medical Missions at Home and Abroad: The Quarterly Magazine of the Medical Missionary Association*,1, (7/1878), 1

'The Irrepressible Woman', *Saturday Review*, 30, (26/11/1870), 682-3

'Justice to Women', *The Spectator*, (13/4/1867), 410-12

'The Ladies' Cry Nothing To Do!', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 19, (3/1869), 451-454

Anon.

'Lady-Doctors', *The Lancet*,1, (12/3/1870), 400

'Lady-Doctors', *Saturday Review*, 17, (30/4/1864), 523-4

'Lady Doctors', *Victoria Magazine*, 3, (6/1864), 126-137

'London School of Medicine for Women', *The Lancet*, 2, (17/10/1874), 561-2

'London School of Medicine for Women', *The Lancet*, 2, (24/10/1874) 597-8

'London University and Female Graduates', *Journal of the Women's Education Union*, 2, (6/1874), 87-9

'The Medical Education of Women', *The Lancet*, 1, (5/5/1870), 672-3

'The Medical Education of Women', *Medical Magazine*, 1, (6/1893), 1138-49

'Medical Missions for Women', *Indian Female Evangelist*, 6, (1/1882), 203

'Medical Women', *The Lancet*, 2, (1/11/1873), 636-7

'Medical Women', *Medical Times and Gazette*, 2, (31/3/1877), 338-9

'Medical Women and the University of London', *The Lancet*, 1, (5/5/1871), 656-7

'Medical Women; or Qualified Female Medical Practitioners', *Leisure Hour*, Annual Volume, (11/1870), 709-12

'Minerva Medica', *British Medical Journal*, 2, (23/9/1871), 356

'Notes from Abroad. The Ameer's Physician, Miss Lilias Hamilton M.D.', *Magazine of the London School of Medicine for Women and the Royal Free Hospital*, no.3, (1/1896), 124-6

'Oxford Reform', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 20, (6/1869), 124-129

'The Physiology of the London Medical Student', *Punch*, 1, (2/10/1841-18/12/1841), 142, 154, 165, 177, 185, 201, 213, 225, 229, 244, 253, 265

'The Probable Retrogression of Women', *Saturday Review*, 32, (1/7/1871), 10-11

'The Profession of Medicine', 67, *Saturday Review* (18/5/1889), 599-600 and (25/5/1889), 633-4

'Queen Bees or Working Bees?', *Saturday Review*, 8, (12/11/1859), 575-6

Anon.

'The Sacred Sex', *Saturday Review*, 31, (13/5/1871), 595-6

'The School of Medicine for Women', *The Lancet*, 1, (30/6/1877), 950

'Sex in Mind and Education: A Commentary', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 115, (6/1874), 736-749

'Sexualism in Edinburgh', *Medical Times and Gazette*, 2, (3/12/1870), 645-6

'Woman in Her Right Place in Relation to Medical Science', *Victoria Magazine*, 17, (6/1871), 109-128

'Women and Medicine', *Nation*, 52, (2/1891), 131

'Women and University Degrees', *Saturday Review*, 38, (18/7/1874), 77-8

'Women at Oxford and Cambridge', *Quarterly Review*, 186, (12/1897), 529-551

'Women at the Universities', *Saturday Review*, 43, (2/6/1877), 660-1

'Women Physicians', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 18, (9/1868), 369-80

'Women Students at Zurich', *Medical Press and Circular*, 2, (23/7/1873), 83

'Women's Friendships', *Saturday Review*, 18, (6/8/1864), 176-7

'Women's Rights', *The Lancet*, 2, (2/8/1862), 123

Beale, Anne

'A Lady's Hospital', *Sunday Magazine*, Annual Volume, (1888), 482-4

Becker, Lydia Ernestina

'On the Study of Science by Women', *Contemporary Review*, 10, (3/1869), 386-404

Bennet, Henry

'Women as Practitioners of Midwifery', *The Lancet*, 1, (18/6/1870), 887-8

Blackwell, Elizabeth

'Letters to Young Ladies Desirous of Studying Medicine', *The English Woman's Journal*, 4, (1/1860), 329-332

'Medicine as a Profession for Women', *The English Woman's Journal*, 5, (5/1860), 145-160

Bolton, Henrietta I.
'Women in Science', *Appleton's Popular Science Monthly*, 53, (8/1898), 508-11

Buckle, Henry Thomas
'The Influence of Women on the Progress of Knowledge', *Fraser's Magazine*, 57, (5/1858), 395-407

Case, Thomas
'Against Oxford Degrees for Women', *Fortnightly Review*, 58, n.s., (7/1895), 89-100

'Certificated Student of Girton College, A'
'A Student's Experiences at Girton College', *The Lady's World*, Annual Volume, (1887), 198-9

'Cissie'
'Medical Women', *Womanhood*, 1, (1/1899), 145-6

Clough, Anne J.
'Hints On the Organization of Girls' Schools', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 14, (10/1866), 435-439

'The Progress of Women III. In Scholarship', *Universal Review*, 3, (11/1888), 302-10

Correlli, Marie
'The Girl Graduate', *Theatre*, 2, (1/11/1883), 246-250

Crackenthorpe, B.A. [Blanche]
'The Revolt of the Daughters', *Nineteenth Century*, 35, (1/1894), 23-31

Crichton-Browne, James
'Should Women be Educated?', *The Englishwoman*, 2, (2/1896), 454-462

Cuffe, Kathleen
'A Reply from the Daughters', *Nineteenth Century*, 35, (3/1894), 437-442

Davies, Rev. J. Llewelyn
'A New College For Women', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 18, (6/1868), 168-175

D'Esterre Keeling, Elsa
'Doctors in Fiction', *Womanhood*, 1, (2/1899), 235-6

Donaldson, M.F.
'A Day at Girton College', *The Lady's World*, Annual Volume, (1887), 142-3

Drayton, H.S.
'Is the Brain of Woman Inferior?', *The Englishwoman*, 3, (8/1896), 463-66

Drysdale, Charles
'Female Medical Missionaries', [Letter to the Editor], *Medical Press and Circular*, 2, (24/12/1873), 575

Dufferin, Harriet
'The National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India', *Asiatic Quarterly Review*, 1, (4/1886), 251-74

'E.S.' [Shirreff, Emily?]
'Girton College', *Journal of the Women's Education Union*, 1, (7/1873), 113-6

Edmunds, James
'Medical Women', *British Medical Journal*, 2, (30/9/1871), 396 and (14/10/1871), 454-5

'English Physician, An'
'Letter to the Editor', *New York Herald*, (12/10/1890)

'Ex-Girtonian, An'
'Girton College', *The Idler*, 5, (6/1894), 532-539

Fenwick Miller, Florence
'Pioneer Medical Women (a Record and a Remembrance)', *Fortnightly Review*, 122, n.s., (11/1924), 692-706

Fitch, J.G.
'The Education of Women', *Victoria Magazine*, 2, (3/1864), 432-453

'Women and the Universities', *Contemporary Review*, 58, (8/1890), 240-255

Francis, C.R.
'Medical Missions to the Women of India', *Indian Female Evangelist*, 6, (10/1881), 150-154

'General Practitioner, A'
'Open Correspondence', *Alexandra Magazine*, 1, (4/1864), 62

Gardiner, Mrs
'A Five Years Retrospect of the National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India', *Magazine of the London School of Medicine for Women and the Royal Free Hospital*, no.5, (10/1896), 197-202 and no.6, (1/1897), 221-3

Garrett Anderson, Elizabeth

'An Address on Medical Ethics', *Magazine of the London School of Medicine for Women and the Royal Free Hospital*, no.5, (10/1896), 175-182

'Sex in Mind and Education: A Reply', *Fortnightly Review*, 15, n.s., (5/1874), 582-594

Garrett Fawcett, Millicent

'Degrees for Women at Oxford', *Contemporary Review*, 69, (3/1896), 347-356

'The History of a Movement', *Fortnightly Review*, 53, n.s., (3/1893), 404-17

'Holes in the Education Net', *Contemporary Review*, 51, (5/1887), 639-653

'The Medical and General Education of Women', *Fortnightly Review*, 23, n.s., (11/1868), 553-571

'Girtonian, A'

'Life at Girton', *Woman's World*, Annual Volume, (1889), 601-6

Gordon, Alice M.

'The After-Careers of University-Educated Women', *Nineteenth Century*, 37, (6/1895), 955-960

Grace, Pierce

'First Among Women', *British Medical Journal*, 303, (21/12/1991), 1582-3

[Gregg, Hilda]

'The Medical Woman in Fiction', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 164, (7/1898), 94-109

Gregory, Samuel

'Female Physicians', *The English Woman's Journal*, 9, (3/1862), 1-11

Haweis, M.E

'The Revolt of the Daughters', *Nineteenth Century*, 35, (3/1894), 430-436

Hemery, Gertrude

'The Revolt of the Daughters. An Answer - By One of Them', *Westminster Review*, 141, (6/1894), 679-681

Hodgson, W.B. [William Ballantyne]

'The Education of Girls, Considered in Connexion [sic] with the University Local Examinations', *Victoria Magazine*, 3, (7/1864), 250-271

Hoggan, Frances Elizabeth
[see also Morgan, Frances Elizabeth]
'Medical Women for India', *Contemporary Review*, 42, (8/1882), 267-275

Huxley, T.H.
'Universities: Actual and Ideal', *Contemporary Review*, 23, (3/1874), 657-679

Jeune, May
'The Revolt of the Daughters', *Fortnightly Review*, 55, n.s., (2/1894), 267-276

Jex-Blake, Sophia
'Medical Women', *Nineteenth Century*, 22, (11/1887), 692-707

'Medical Women', [Letter to the Editor], *The Lancet*, 2, (8/11/1873), 688

'Medical Women in Fiction', *Nineteenth Century*, 33, (2/1893), 261-272

'Women as Practitioners of Midwifery', [Letter to the Editor], *The Lancet*, 2, (9/7/1870), 63-4

Kenealy, Arabella
'A New View of the Surplus of Women', *Westminster Review*, 136, (11/1891), 465-75

'How Women Doctors Are Made', *The Ludgate*, 4, n.s., (5/1897), 29-36

'The Worship of Masculinity', *The Gentleman's Magazine'*, 265, (10/1888), 354-369

Knatchbull-Hugessen, Eva
'Newnham College from Within', *Nineteenth Century*, 21, (6/1887), 843-856

'Lady Undergraduate, A'
'A Day of Her Life at Oxford', *Murray's Magazine*, 3, (5/1888), 678-688

Lynn Linton, Eliza
'The Higher Education of Woman', *Fortnightly Review*, 40, n.s., (10/1886), 498-510

'M.D.C.'
'Female Medicine', *The English Woman's Journal*, 12, (1/1864), 336-41

Macdonald, Miss
'Student Life in London', *Journal of the University Association of Women Teachers*, no. 8, (12/1894), 66-7

Markby, Thomas
'The Education of Women', *Contemporary Review*, 1, (3/1866), 396-414

Marshall, Mary A.
'Medicine as a Profession for Women', *Woman's World*, Annual Volume, (1888), 105-110

'Mater'
'A Lady on Lady Doctors', [Letter to the Editor], *The Lancet*, 1, (7/5/1870), 680

Maudsley, Henry
'Sex in Mind and in Education', *Fortnightly Review*, 15, n.s., (4/1874), 466-483

'Member, A'
'The Oxford Ladies' Colleges by a Member of One of Them', *Woman's World*, Annual Volume, (1888), 32-5

'Mental Physician, A'
'Female Medicine', [Letter to the Editor], *The Lancet*, 1, (21/5/1870), 751-2

Moorman, William
'The Medical Profession and Women's Rights', [Letter to the Editor], *The Lancet*, 2, (6/9/1862), 268-9

Morgan, Frances Elizabeth
[see also Hoggan, Frances Elizabeth]
'Medical Women', [Letter to the Editor], *The Lancet*, 2, (20/12/1873), 897

Murray, Flora
'The Position of Women in Medicine', *New Statesman*, Special Supplement on the Awakening of Women, (1/11/1913), 14-18

Myers, Frederic W.H.
'Local Lectures for Women', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 19, (12/1868), 159-163

'Old Student, An'
'A Short Visit to Royal Holloway College', *The Englishwoman*, 8, (10/1898), 107-116

Orchard, J.C.
'Medical Women', [Letter to the Editor], *The Lancet*, 2, (22/11/1873), 762

'Women Doctors', [Letter to the Editor], *The Lancet*, 1, (3/1/1874), 40

Pearce, F. Mabelle
'To an "Advanced Woman" ', *The Idler*, 6, (1895), 140-1

Pearsall Smith, Alys W.
'A Reply from the Daughters', *Nineteenth Century*, 35, (3/1894), 443-450

'Physician, A'
'Medical Education for Ladies', *The English Woman's Journal*, 5, (7/1860), 315-21

Romanes, George J.
'Mental Differences Between Men and Women', *Nineteenth Century*, 21, (5/1887), 654-672

Scharlieb, Mary
'The Progress of Woman IV. In Science and Medicine', *The Universal Review*, 3, (11/1888), 295-316

Shirreff, Emily
'College Education for Women', *Contemporary Review*, 15, (8/1870), 55-66

Stansfield, James
'Medical Women', *Nineteenth Century*, 1, (7/1877), 888-901

Thompson, Christine
'Disruptive Desire: Medical Careers for Victorian Women in Fact and Fiction', *Nineteenth Century Contexts*, 15, no.2, (1991), 181-196

Thorne, Isabel
'Some Early Edinburgh Experiences', *Magazine of the London School of Medicine for Women and the Royal Free Hospital*, no.4, (5/1896), 133-4 and no.5, (10/1896), 183-188

[Todd, Margaret]
'Some Thoughts on the Woman Question by the Author of *Mona Maclean*', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 156, (11/1894), 689-92

'Undergraduate, An'
'A Day of His Life at Oxford', *Murray's Magazine*, 3, (5/1888), 664-677

Vane, Geraldine
'A Clever Woman Versus the Social Butterfly' *The Englishwoman*, 7, (3/1898), 23-4

Vernon, Maud Venables
'How Should Women be Educated? A Reply to Sir James Crichton-Browne' *The Englishwoman*, 3, (5/1896), 177-181

Vicinus, Martha
' "One Life To Stand Beside Me": Emotional Conflicts in First-Generation College Women in England', *Feminist Studies*, 8, no.3, (Fall 1982), 603-628

Wager, Mary E.
'Women as Physicians', *Galaxy*, 6, (12/1868), 774-789

Wilson, Robert
'Æsculapia Victrix', *Fortnightly Review*, 39, n.s., (1/1886), 18-33

Winslow, Henry, F.
'Female Medical Graduates', *The Lancet*, 1, (24/3/1877), 440-1

'Woman of the Day, A'
'Dies Dominæ', *Saturday Review*, 79, (18/6/1895), 646-7 and (25/6/1895), 687-8

Woolmer, D.L.
'Lady Doctors in Heathen Lands', *The Quiver*, Annual Volume, (1899), 97-105

Young, Ruth
'The Medical Profession as a Calling for Women', *Atalanta*, 11, (10/1897), 694-96

Other works consulted:

Ablett, John
Why Boys and Girls Should be Co-educated, London 1897

Acres, E. Louie
Helen Hanson: A Memoir, London 1928

Alic, Margaret
Hypatia's Heritage: A History of Women in Science from Antiquity to the Late Nineteenth Century, London 1986

Anderson, William
Female Education in Relation to the Wants of the Age, Aberdeen 1851

Anon.
An Essay on Woman, Her Character and Vicissitudes, London 1845

Desultory Queries and Remarks Proposed to the Whole World in [sic] *Behalf of the Female Sex; Designed to Draw Forth an Abler Hand*, Chelmsford 1828

Medical Intolerance and Lady Doctors in *Fitzroy Pamphlets*, London 1867

Thoughts Relative to the Education of Women on the Principles of Moral Science, London 1865

What is A Lady?, London 1885

Woman's Work or How She Can Help the Sick, London 1860

Anon.
Woman's Work: A Woman's Thoughts on Women's Rights, Edinburgh 1876

Women Doctors, An Appeal to the Gentlemen of England in *Medical Pamphlets*, London 1867

Women's Work in the Indian Mission Field, Calcutta 1883

Antler, Joyce
The Educated Woman and Professionalization: The Struggle for a New Feminine Identity 1890-1920, New York 1987

Arata, Stephen
Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle, Cambridge 1996

Ardis, Ann
New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism, New Brunswick 1990

Atthill, Lombe
Clinical Lectures on Diseases Peculiar to Women, Dublin 1883 [seventh edition, revised and enlarged]

Auerbach, Nina
Communities of Women: An Idea in Fiction, Cambridge, Mass 1978

Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth, Cambridge, Mass 1982

Bebel, Ferdinand August
[tr. Adams, Walter H.B.]
Woman in the Past, Present, and Future, London 1885

Bailey, Gemma, ed.
Lady Margaret Hall: A Short History, London 1923

Balfour, Frances
Dr Elsie Inglis, London 1918

Balfour, Margaret I.,
and Young, Ruth
The Work of Medical Women in India, London 1929

Beetham, Margaret
A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine 1800-1914, London 1996

Bélinki, Karmela
Women's Suffrage and Fiction in England, 1905-1914: Facts and Visions, Helsinki 1984

Bell, E. Moberley [Enid]
Storming the Citadel: The Rise of the Woman Doctor, London 1953

Bell, Robert

Woman in Health and Sickness; or, What She Ought to Know for the Exigencies of Daily Life, Glasgow 1889

Bennett, Daphne

Emily Davies and the Liberation of Women 1830-1921, London 1990

Bjørhovde, Gerd

Rebellious Structures. Women Writers and the Crisis of the Novel 1880-1900, London 1987

Blackwell, Elizabeth

Christianity in Medicine: An Address Delivered Before the Christo-theosophical Society, December 18th, 1890, London 1891

Erroneous Method in Medical Education. Addressed Originally to the Alumnæ Association of the Women's Medical College of the New York Infirmary, London 1891

How to Keep a Household in Health: An Address Delivered Before the Working Women's College, London 1870

Pioneer Work in Opening the Medical Profession to Women: Autobiographical Sketches, London 1895

The Human Element in Sex: Being a Model Enquiry into the Relation of Sexual Physiology to Christian Morality, London 1884
[second edition]

The Influence of Women in the Profession of Medicine. Address Given at the Opening of the Winter Session of the London School of Medicine for Women, London 1889

Blain, Virginia, Clements, Patricia,
and Grundy, Isobel, eds

The Feminist Companion to Literature in English: Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present, London 1990

Blake, Catriona

The Charge of the Parasols: Women's Entry to the Medical Profession, London 1990

Boumelha, Penny

Thomas Hardy and Women: Sexual Ideology and Narrative Form, Brighton 1982

Bourdillon, Hilary

Women as Healers: A History of Women and Medicine, Cambridge 1988

Brackett, Anna, ed.

The Education of American Girls Considered in a Series of Essays, New York 1874

Branca, Patricia
Silent Sisterhood: Middle-Class Women in the Victorian Home, London 1975

Bremner, C.S. [Christina]
Education of Girls and Women in Great Britain, London 1897

Bristow, Joseph
Empire Boys: Adventures in a Man's World, London 1991

Brittain, Vera
Lady into Woman: A History of Women from Victoria to Elizabeth II, London 1953

The Women at Oxford: A Fragment of History, London 1960

Brooke, Elisabeth
Woman Healers Through History, London 1993

[Brown Book]
The Brown Book. Lady Margaret Hall Chronicle, Oxford 1906 etc.

Bryant, Margaret
The Unexpected Revolution: A Study in the History of the Education of Women and Girls in the Nineteenth Century, London 1979

Bryant, Mrs S. [Sophie]
Over-Work: From the Teacher's Point of View. With Special Reference to the Work in Schools for Girls. A Lecture Delivered at the College of Preceptors November 19th, 1884., London 1885

Burstyn, Joan N.
Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood, London 1980

Burton, Hester
Barbara Bodichon: 1827-1891, London 1949

Burton, J.
Lectures on Female Education and Manners, Rochester 1793

Butler, Josephine, ed.
Woman's Work and Woman's Culture. A Series of Essays, London 1869

Butler, R.F., and
Brichard M.H., eds
The Society of Oxford Home Students, Retrospects and Recollections (1879-1921), Oxford n.d.

Byrne, Muriel St Clare,
and Mansfield, Catherine Hope
Somerville College 1879-1921, Oxford 1922

Chaff, Sandra L., Fenichel, Carol,
Haimbach, Ruth and Woodside,
Nina B., eds
Women in Medicine: A Bibliography of the Literature on Women Physicians, London 1977

Chreiman, Miss
The Physical Education of Girls, London 1884

Clarke, Edward H.
Sex in Education; or a Fair Chance for Girls, Boston 1874

Clouston, T.S.
Clinical Lectures on Mental Diseases, London 1883

Cobbe, Frances Power
Female Education and How It Might Be Affected by University Examinations. A Paper Read at the Social Science Congress, London 1862, London 1862 [second edition]

Courtney, Janet E. [Hogarth]
The Women of My Time, London 1934

An Oxford Portrait Gallery, London 1931

Recollected in Tranquillity, London 1926

Cross, F.L., and Livingstone, E.A., eds
The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, Oxford 1997
[third edition]

Cunningham, Gail
The New Woman and the Victorian Novel, London 1978

Daims, Diva, and Grimes, Janet
Novels in English by Women, 1890-1920: A Preliminary Checklist, New York 1981

Towards a Feminist Tradition: An Annotated Bibliography of Novels in English by Women 1891-1920, New York 1982

Dalton, Henry
The Education of Girls. An Extract from an Exhaustive Essay on Woman, London 1877

Davies, Emily
The Higher Education of Women, London 1866

Thoughts on Some Questions Relating to Women, 1860-1908, Cambridge 1910

Women in the Universities of England and Scotland, Cambridge 1896

Delamont, Sara, and Duffin, Lorna, eds
The Nineteenth-Century Woman: Her Cultural and Physical World, New York 1978

Donnison, Jean
Midwives and Medical Men: A History of Inter-Professional Rivalries and Women's Rights, London 1977

Drysdale, Charles R.
Medicine as a Profession for Women, London 1870

Duberman, Martin, Vicinus, Martha,
and Chauncey, George, eds
Hidden From History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past, New York 1989

Duffey, Mrs E.B. [Eliza Bisbee]
No Sex in Education; or an Equal Chance for Both Girls and Boys, Being a Review of Dr. E.H. Clarke's 'Sex in Education', Philadelphia 1874

Dyhouse, Carol
No Distinction of Sex? Women in British Universities 1870-1939, London 1995

'E.T.M.'
[Minturn, Eliza Theodora]
An Interior View of Girton College, Cambridge, London 1876

Ehrenreich, Barbara, and English, Deirdre
Complaints and Disorders: The Sexual Politics of Sickness, New York 1973

Ellis, Sarah Stickney
The Daughters of England, Their Position in Society, Character, and Responsibilities, London 1845

[Encyclopædic]
The Encyclopædic Dictionary: A New and Original Work of Reference to all the Words in the English Language, with a Full Account of Their Origin, Meaning, Pronunciation, and Use. With Numerous Illustrations, vol.2 n.d., vol. 4 1888, London [1880s]

Faithfull, Lilian
In the House of My Pilgrimage, London 1924

Fancourt, Mary St John
They Dared to Be Doctors. Elizabeth Blackwell. Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, London 1965

Fernando, Lloyd
'New Women' in the Late Victorian Novel, University Park, PA 1977

Fix Anderson, Nancy
Woman Against Women in Victorian England: A Life of Eliza Lynn Linton, Indianapolis 1987

Fletcher, Sheila
Feminists and Bureaucrats, A Study in the Development of Girls' Education in the Nineteenth Century, Cambridge 1980

Flint, Kate
The Woman Reader 1837-1914, Oxford 1993

Forster, Margaret
Significant Sisters: The Grassroots of Active Feminism 1839 -1939, London 1984

French, Francesca
Miss Brown's Hospital: The Story of the Ludhiana Medical College and Dame Edith Brown O.B.E., Its Founder, London 1954

Gardner, Alice
A Short History of Newnham College, Cambridge, Cambridge 1921

Garrett Anderson, Louisa
Elizabeth Garrett Anderson 1836-1917, London 1939

[Girton]
Girton College Register 1896-1946, Cambridge 1948

The Girton Review: Jubilee Number, Cambridge 1920

'Girtonian, A'
Letters from a Cottage. A True Story by a Girtonian., London 1886

Gorham, Deborah
The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal, London 1982

'Graduate, A'
From Hospital to Consulting Room, With Notes by the Way: A Medical Autobiography, London 1893

Graham, Catherine Macaulay
Letters on Education with Observations on Religious and Metaphysical Subjects, London 1790

Grant, Alexander
Happiness and Utility as Promoted by the Higher Education of Women. An Address Delivered by Sir Alexander Grant, Bart., LL.D, Principal of the University of Edinburgh, in Opening the Sixth Session of the Edinburgh Ladies' Educational Association on the 5th November 1872, Edinburgh 1872

Gray, Frances R.
And Gladly Wolde He Lerne and Gladly Teche. A Book about Learning and Teaching, London 1931

Greene, Gayle, and Kahn, Coppélia, eds
Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism, London 1991 [first published 1985]

Greene, William B.
Critical Comments Upon Certain Special Passages in the Introductory Portion of Dr. Edward Clarke's Book on 'Sex in Education', Boston 1874

Gregory, Samuel
Letters to Ladies in Favour of Female Physicians, Boston 1850

Grey, Mrs W.M. [Maria]
Paper on the Study of Education as a Science, London 1874

On the Education of Women, London 1871

On the Special Requirements for Improving the Education of Girls. A Paper Read by Mrs William Grey at the Meeting of the Society of Arts, May 31st, 1871. With an Appendix, London 1872

The School Board of London. Three Addresses of Mrs William Grey in the Borough of Chelsea with a Speech by William Grove, London 1871

Last Words to Girls on Life in School and After School, London 1889

Grey, Maria, and Shirreff, Emily
Thoughts on Self-Culture Addressed to Women, London 1850

Griffin, Penny, ed.
St Hugh's: One Hundred Years of Women's Education in Oxford, Basingstoke 1986

Hamilton, Mary Agnes
Newnham. An Informal Biography, London 1937

Harman, Barbara Leah, and Meyer, Susan, eds
The New Nineteenth Century: Feminist Readings of Underread Victorian Fiction, New York 1996

Harrison, Jane Ellen
Reminiscences of a Student's Life, London 1925

Hartman, Mary S., and Banner, Lois W., eds
Clio's Consciousness Raised: New Perspectives on the History of Women, London 1974

Hawtrey, Mabel
The Co-education of the Sexes, London 1896

Hayes, Mrs M.H. [Alice]
My Leper Friends: An Account of Personal Work Among Lepers and of Their Daily Life in India, London 1891

Herbert, Eugenia W.
The Artist and Social Reform: France and Belgium 1885-1898, New Haven 1961

Hill, Georgiana
Women in English Life from Mediæval to Modern Times, London 1896

Hobman, D.L. [Daisy Lucie]
Go Spin You Jade! Studies in the Emancipation of Woman, London 1957

Hodgson, W.B. [William Ballantyne]
The Education of Girls and the Employment of Women of the Upper Classes Educationally Considered: Two Lectures, London 1869 [second edition]

Hoggan, Frances Elizabeth
Co-education at Different Ages, London 1883

On The Physical Education of Girls, London 1880

The Microscope as Affording Employment and Recreation to Women, with Hints for Beginners how to Set to Work, London n.d. [1879?]

The Position of the Mother in the Family in Its Legal and Scientific Aspects, Manchester 1884

Hollis, Patricia
Women in Public: The Women's Movement 1850-1900, London 1979

Hooker, Worthington
Physician and Patient; or, a Practical View of the Mutual Duties, Relations, and Interests of the Medical Profession and the Community, New York 1849

Howe, Julia Ward, ed.
Sex and Education. A Reply to Dr. E.H. Clarke's 'Sex in Education', Boston 1874

Huntley, Edith Ara
The Study and Practise of Medicine by Women, Lewes 1886

Hutton, Richard Holt
The Relative Value of Studies and Accomplishments in the Education of Women. A Lecture, Intended as a Contribution Towards Determining the True Intellectual Standard of Female Education in the Middle Classes, London 1862

'J.G.G.'
From Doubt to Faith (The Story of a Newnham Girl), London 1896

Jacobus, Mary, Fox Keller, Evelyn,
and Shuttleworth, Sally, eds
Body/Politics. Women and the Discourses of Science, London 1990

Jex-Blake, Sophia
Medical Women: A Thesis and a History, Edinburgh 1886

Johnson, George William
The Evolution of Woman from Subjection to Comradeship,
London 1926

Jones, E.C.C. [Emily Elizabeth Constance]
As I Remember: An Autobiographical Ramble, London 1922

Kamm, Josephine
Hope Deferred: Girls' Education in English History, London 1965

Kaye, Elaine
A History of Queen's College, London 1848-1972, London 1972

Kenealy, Arabella
Feminism and Sex Extinction, London 1920

Knight, William
The Higher Education of Women with Special Reference to the St Andrew[']s University L.L.A. Title and Diploma, Being a Lecture Delivered in the University Colleges of Leeds, Liverpool, Bristol etc.,
Edinburgh 1887

Kranidis, Rita S.
Subversive Discourse: The Cultural Production of Late-Victorian Feminist Novels, New York 1995

[Lady Margaret Hall]
Lady Margaret Hall Register, 1879-1920, Oxford 1923

'Lady, A'
A Word in Favour of Female Schools, Addressed to Parents, Guardians, and the Public at Large, London 1826

Laqueur, Thomas
Making Sex, Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud,
London 1990

Lefkowitz, Mary R., and Fant, Maureen B.
Women's Life in Greece and Rome, London 1988

Leonardi, Susan J.
Dangerous By Degrees. Women at Oxford and the Somerville College Novelists, New Brunswick 1988

Levering Lewis, David
The Race to Fashoda: European Colonialism and African Resistance in the Scramble for Africa, London 1988

List, E. Brenda
"Girton, My Friend" and Other Matter, Cambridge 1908

Lloyd, Edith M.
Anna Lloyd (1837-1925): A Memoir with Extracts from the Letters, London 1928

Lodge, Eleanor C. [Spens, Janet, ed.]
Terms and Vacations, London 1938

Lohse, Johanne
Mistaken Views in the Education of Girls, Christchurch 1885 [second edition]

'London Physician, A'
Men Midwives and Female Physicians: A Series of Extracts Showing the United Opinion of Many Eminent Medical Men. Revised by a London Physician, London 1864

'Lover of Her Sex, A' [Astell, Mary]
A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, For the Advancement of Their True and Greatest Interests, London 1694

Low, Gail Ching-Liang
White Skins/Black Masks: Representation and Colonialism, London 1996

Lumsden, Louisa Innes
Yellow Leaves. Memories of a Long Life, Edinburgh 1933

Lynn Linton, Eliza
The Girl of the Period and Other Social Essays, London 1883,

Macaulay, Catherine
See Graham, Catherine Macaulay

[Makin, Bathsua]
An Essay to Revive the Ancient Education of Gentlewomen, in Religion, Manners, Arts, & Tongues. With an Answer to the Objections Against this Way of Education, London 1673

Manton, Joan
Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, London 1965

Markby, Thomas
Medical Women, London 1869

Marks, Patricia
Bicycles, Bangs and Bloomers. The New Woman in the Popular Press, University Press of Kentucky 1990

Marshall, Mary Paley
What I Remember, Cambridge 1947

Martindale, Hilda
Some Victorian Portraits and Others, London 1948

Martindale, Louisa
The Woman Doctor and Her Future, London 1922

A Woman Surgeon, London 1951

McKenna, Ethel, ed.
The Woman's Library, London 1903

McWilliams-Tullberg, Rita
Women at Cambridge: A Men's University, Though of a Mixed Type, London 1975

Megson, B., and Lindsay, J.
Girton College 1869-1959: An Informal History, Cambridge 1961

Miller, Jane Eldridge
Rebel Women: Feminism, Modernism and the Edwardian Novel, London 1994

Minturn, Eliza Theodora
See 'E.T.M.'

Mitchell, Sally
The New Girl: Girls' Culture in England, 1880-1915, New York 1995

'Modern Maid, A'
Modern Man, London 1887

Morely, Edith J.
Women Workers in Seven Professions. A Survey of Their Economic Conditions and Prospects, London 1914

Moscucci, Ornella
The Science of Woman: Gynaecology and Gender in England, 1800-1929, Cambridge 1990

Murray, Janet Horowitz, ed.
Strong-minded Women and Other Lost Voices from Nineteenth-Century England, New York 1982

[Newnham]
Newnham College Register 1871-1950, Cambridge 1979

Norquay, Glenda
Voices and Votes: A Literary Anthology of the Women's Suffrage Campaign, Manchester 1995

Oakeley, Herbert
Opening Address to Edinburgh Association for the University Education of Women, November 4th 1884, Edinburgh 1884

Parker, Christopher, ed.
Gender Roles and Sexuality in Victorian Literature, Aldershot 1995

[Parkes, Bessie Raynes]
Remarks on the Education of Girls, London 1854

Pascoe, Charles Eyre
Schools for Girls and Colleges for Women. A Handbook of Female Education Chiefly Designed for the Use of Persons of the Upper Middle Classes. Together with Some Chapters on the Higher Employment of Women, London 1879

Pederson, Joyce Senders
The Reform of Girls' Secondary and Higher Education in Victorian England: A Study of Elites and Educational Change, New York 1987

Percival, Alicia C.
The English Miss Today and Yesterday. Ideals, Methods and Personalities in the Education and Upbringing of Girls During the Last Hundred Years, London 1939

Percival, Thomas
Medical Ethics; or, a Code of Institutes and Precepts Adapted to the Professional Conduct of Physicians and Surgeons, Manchester 1803

Peterson, M. Jeanne
The Medical Profession in Mid-Victorian London,
London 1978

Phillips, Ann, ed.
A Newnham Anthology, Cambridge 1979

'Physician, A'
The Ladies Physical Directory; or, a Treatise of all the Weaknesses, Indispositions and Diseases Peculiar to the Female Sex from Eleven Years of Age, to Fifty or Upwards, London 1727 [third edition]

Pitman, Mrs E.R. [Emma Raymond]
Missionary Heroines in Eastern Lands: Woman's Work in Mission Fields, London 1895

Poovey, Mary
Uneven Developments. The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England, Chicago 1988

Pykett, Lyn
The 'Improper' Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing, London 1992

Pykett, Lyn, ed.
Reading Fin de Siècle Fictions, London 1996

Rae, Isobel
The Strange Story of Dr. James Barry, London 1958

Rendall, Jane, ed.
Equal or Different: Women's Politics 1800-1914, Oxford 1987

[Report]
Report of a Conference of Head-Mistresses and Other Persons Interested in the Higher Education of Women, Cambridge 1878

[Reports]
Reports Issued by the Schools' Inquiry Commission on the Education of Girls. With Extracts from the Evidence and a Preface by D.[Dorothea] Beale, London n.d.

'Retired Governess, A'
A Legacy of Affection, Advice, and Instruction, From a Retired Governess to the Present Pupils of an Establishment Near London, For Female Education Which She Conducted Upwards of Forty Years, London 1827

Rivington, Walter
The Medical Profession: Being the Essay to which was Awarded the First Carmichael Prize of £200 by the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons, Ireland, Dublin 1879

Roberts, Shirley
Sophia Jex-Blake: A Woman Pioneer in Nineteenth- Century Medical Reform, London 1993

Roe, Mrs
A Woman's Thoughts on the Education of Girls, London 1866

Rogers, Annie
Degrees by Degrees: The Story of the Admission of Oxford Women Students to Membership of the University, Oxford 1938

Rose, June
The Perfect Gentleman, the Remarkable Life of Dr James Miranda Barry, the Woman Who Served as an Officer in the British Army from 1813 to 1859, London 1977

Ross, Ishbel
Child of Destiny: The Life Story of the First Woman Doctor, London 1950

Rubinstein, David
Before the Suffragettes: Women's Emancipation in the 1890s, Brighton 1986

Said, Edward
Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient, London 1995 [reprinted with a new afterward, first published 1978]

Sanders, Valerie
Eve's Renegades: Victorian Anti-Feminist Novelists, London 1996

Sandford, Mrs John [Elizabeth]
Woman in her Social and Domestic Character, London 1831

Scharlieb, Mary
The Bachelor Woman and Her Problems, London 1929

Reminiscences, London 1924

Seven Lamps of Medicine: Inaugural Address Delivered at the London School of Medicine for Women, October 1st 1887, London 1888

What It Means to Marry or Young Women and Marriage, London 1914

Womanhood and Race Regeneration, London 1912

A Woman's Words to Women on the Care of Their Health in England and India, London 1895

Shires, Linda M., ed.
Rewriting the Victorians. Theory, History and the Politics of Gender, London 1992

Shirreff, Emily
Intellectual Education and Its Influence on the Character and Happiness of Women, London 1858

The Work of the National Union, London 1874

Showalter, Elaine
The Female Malady. Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980, London 1987 [first published 1985]

A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing, Princeton 1977

Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle, New York 1990

Sidgwick, Mrs Henry [Eleanor Mildred]
Health Statistics of Women Students of Cambridge and Oxford and of Their Sisters, Cambridge 1890

University Education of Women: A Lecture Delivered at University College, Liverpool, in May 1896, Cambridge 1897

Smith, Roger
Trial by Medicine: Insanity and Responsibility in Victorian Trials, Edinburgh 1981

Sobal, Nancy Lee
Curing and Caring: A Literary View of Professional Medical Women, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cincinnati 1984

[Somerville]
Somerville College, Oxford Calendar 1896-1922, Oxford 1896 etc.

Somerville, Martha, ed.
Personal Recollections, from Early Life to Old Age, of Mary Somerville with Selections from her Correspondence, London 1873

Sontag, Susan
Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors, London 1990

Spender, Dale, ed.
The Education Papers: Women's Quest for Equality in Britain 1850-1912, London 1987

Spicer, Trevethan
Female Education. Notes of an Address Delivered to the Pupils of Alfred House, Collegiate Institution for Young Ladies, Upper Holloway on Thursday June 14th 1849 at the Distribution of Certificates, London 1849

Stanton, Theodore, ed.
The Woman Question in Europe: A Series of Original Essays, London 1884

Stephen, Barbara
Emily Davies and Girton College, London 1927

Girton College 1869-1932, Cambridge 1933

Stokes, John
In the Nineties, Hemel Hempstead 1989

Stubbs, Patricia
Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel 1880-1920, Brighton 1979

'Surgeon and Accoucheur, A'
Girlhood and Wifehood. Practical Counsel and Advice, London n.d. [1896]

Swanwick, Helena M.
I Have Been Young, London 1935

Swenson, Kristine L.
Treating a Sick Culture: Victorian Fictions of Medical Women, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa 1995

Tabor, Margaret E.
Pioneer Women: Series One, London 1925

Talley, William
Men in Female-Attire; or, the Opinion of Eminent University Men and Scientific Women on Delicate Subjects, London 1864

Thorburn, John
'Female Education from a Physiological Point of View' in *Six Introductory Lectures Delivered in the Medical Department of the Owens College, Manchester, May 1884. By Dr. Cullingworth, Dr. Ashby, Dr. Leech, Dr. Thorburn, Mr. Mould, and Dr. Ransome. With a Preface by Professor Arthur Gamgee, M.D., Dean of the Department*, Manchester 1884

Thorne, Isabel
A Sketch of the Foundation and Development of The London School of Medicine for Women, London 1916 [second edition]

Tod, Isabella M.S.
On the Education of Girls of the Middle Classes, London 1874

Todd, Margaret
The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake, London 1918

Tuke, Margaret
A History of Bedford College for Women 1849-1937, London 1939

Tylecote, Mabel
The Education of Women at Manchester University 1883 to 1933, Manchester 1941

Van Thal, Herbert
Eliza Lynn Linton: The Girl of the Period, London 1979

Vicinus, Martha
Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920, London 1985

Warwick, Countess of, ed.
Progress in Women's Education in the British Empire Being the Report of the Education Section, Victorian Era Exhibition, 1897, London 1898

Webster, Charles, ed.
Biology, Medicine and Society 1840-1940, Cambridge 1981

West, Charles
Medical Women: A Statement and an Argument, London 1878

The Profession of Medicine, Its Study and Practice; Its Duties and Rewards, London 1896

Wollstonecraft, Mary
Vindication of the Rights of Woman, London 1985
[first published 1792]

'Womanly Woman, A'
Women's Rights and the Wife at Home, London 1872

Woodward, John, and Richards, David, eds
Health Care and Popular Medicine in Nineteenth-Century England, London 1977

Zewde, Bahru
A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1974, London 1991

Zimmern, Alice
The Renaissance of Girls' Education in England: A Record of Fifty Years' Progress, London 1898